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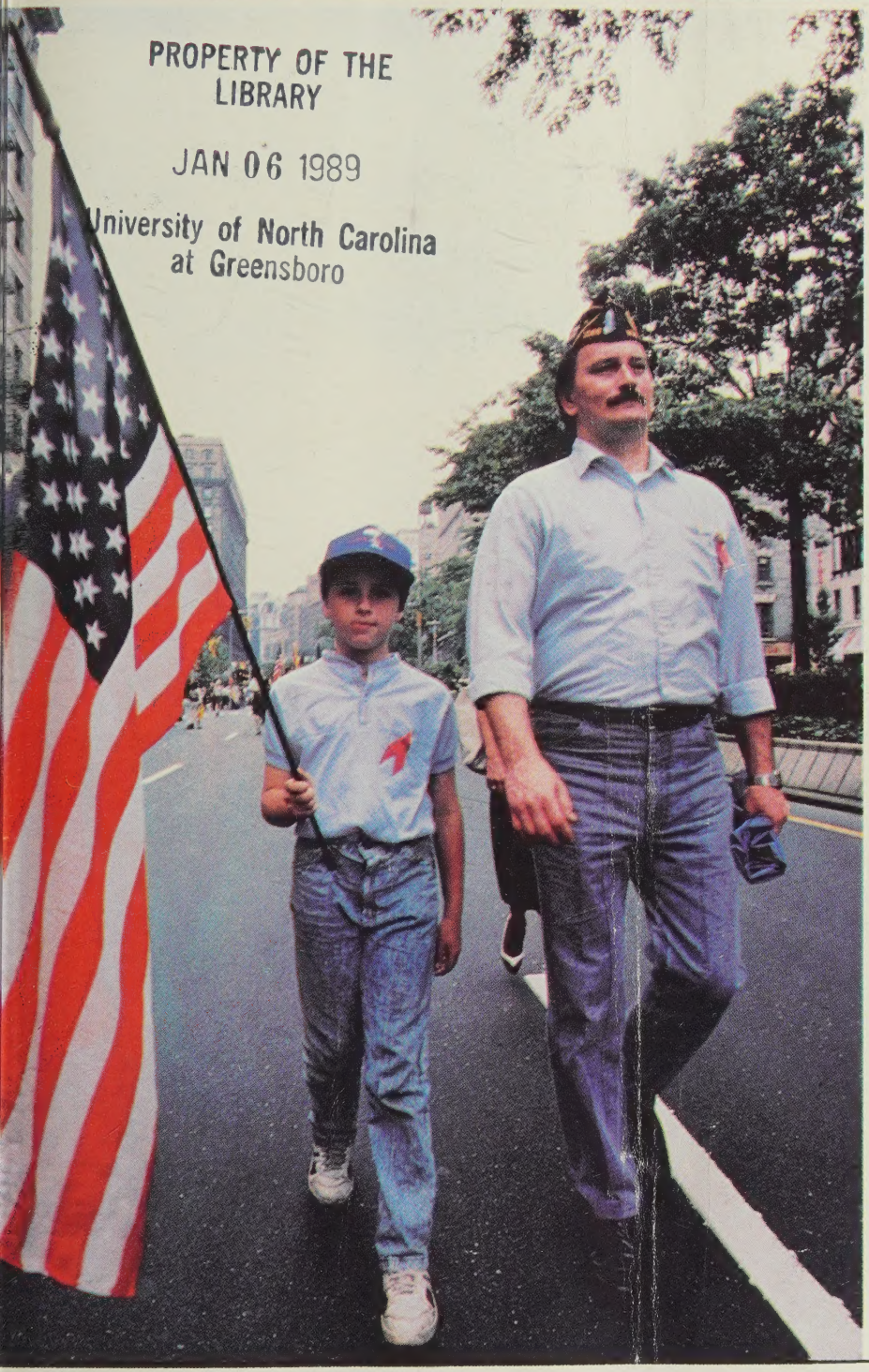
DECEMBER 1988

NEW TIMES

A SOVIET WEEKLY
OF WORLD AFFAIRS

The democratic alternative in science



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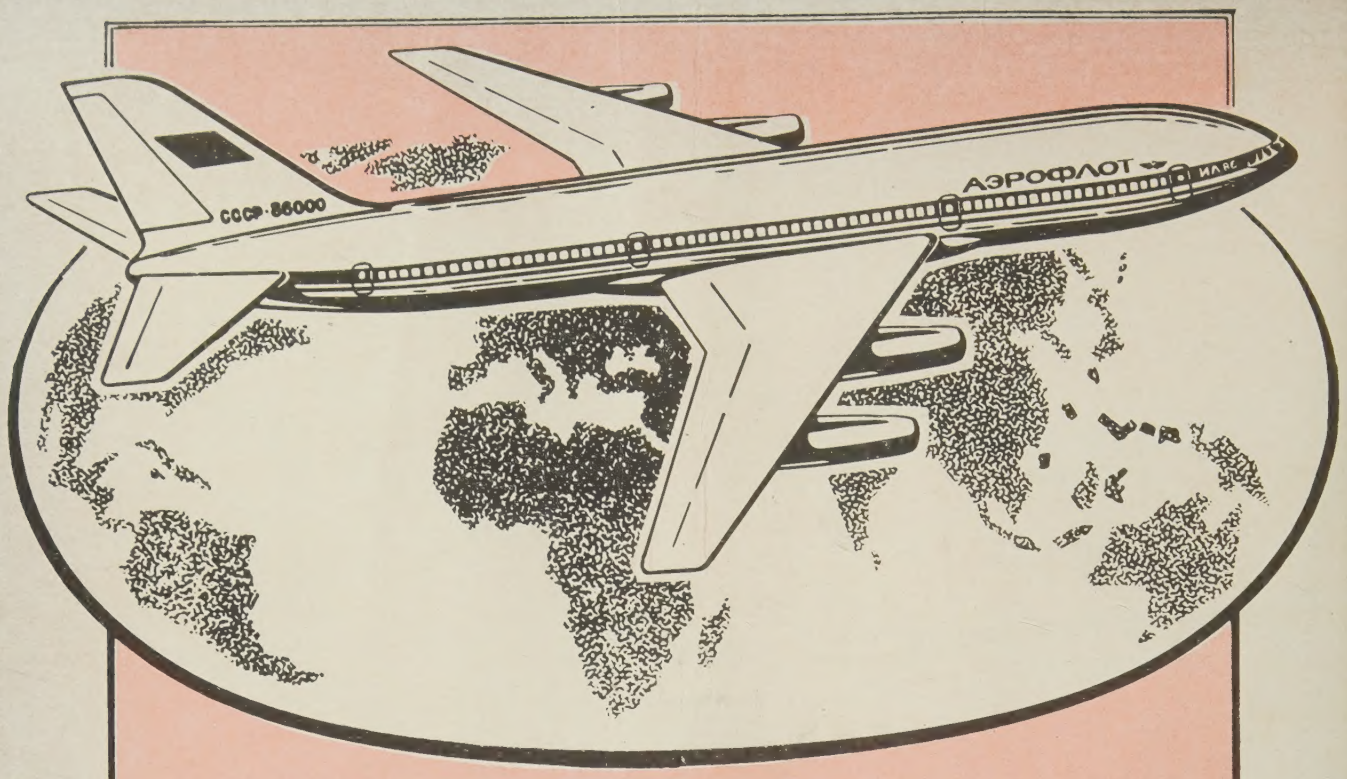
The Soviet leader across the Atlantic

U.S.A. December 1988

When nations meet

Unarmed warriors: the International Red Cross



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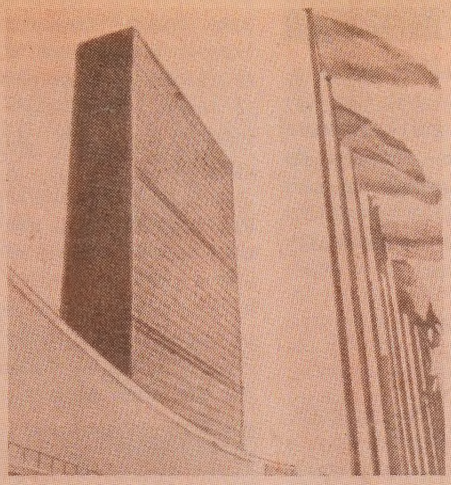

Gorbachev addresses the 43rd General Assembly. Meetings in New York: Soviet-American dialogue goes on.

See p. 5 for an on-the-spot report by Alexander Pumpyansky, our special correspondent

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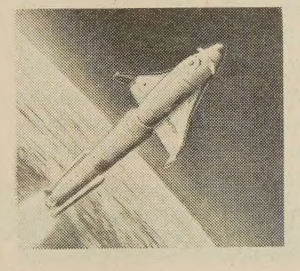

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Cover by Vladimir Pchelkin

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OPINIONS

L. Polevaya
Ashkhabad, U.S.S.R.

■ I want to continue the discussion on the question of paid medical treatment, which A. Karpus touched on in his letter (issue No. 42/88). It has already been widely aired in the media, and after every article or broadcast I have felt increasingly worried.

To put it mildly, the quality of medical care in our country leaves much to be desired. But I feel the problem cannot be solved by placing the health service on a cooperative basis, that is, by treating people for money.

Take my family, a fairly typical one for our country. We have two children. I earn 80 and my husband 180 rubles a month. In terms of our average monthly income our family isn't poor, and therefore we can't count on any privileges. But you will agree that it's not easy to live on such money today.

If paid medical care is introduced, we shall simply be unable to afford it, because we shall have to pay for everything (examination, consultation, treatment and, God forbid, surgery), and I have heard that medical cooperatives charge high prices for their services.

We shall then be doomed to gradual extinction.

Jan Proszowski
Warsaw, Poland

■ One of my acquaintances has returned from a visit to the Soviet Union bringing with him a colourfully illustrated booklet about Rovno published in Polish by the Intourist travel agency. In the section of the booklet devoted to the history of this west Ukrainian city he came across the following sentence: "Only the golden September of 1939 brought liberation to Rovno."

But it was in September 1939 that the Second World War began and the nazi hordes invaded Poland, trampling millions of people underfoot. In the autumn of 1939, the nazis, using ruthless methods of warfare, killed thousands of innocent civilians, among them women and children, in towns and villages in our country. It was an orgy of mass annihilation that reached the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Is it possible, knowing all this, to write about the "golden" September of 1939? The above-cited sentence in a booklet put out in thousands of copies and intended for Polish tourists is offensive to me and other citizens of my country.

It is strange that the booklet should have appeared in 1988 (Kiev, Reklama publishers, editor A.S. Shevchenko), when, for the sake of restoring the historical truth, the Soviet Union is reappraising the events that took place on the eve of the war in the Germany-Soviet Union-Poland triangle.

During his tour of the Soviet Union, my acquaintance also visited the Ukraine. He returned home full of very pleasant impressions. He had many cordial meetings with hospitable people in Kiev. However, he did not meet with editor Shevchenko.

CARRYING ON THE DISCUSSION

Anatoly Razumov,
bibliographer,
Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

■ Thank you for publishing the report, "Attempt to whitewash Stalin fails," in issue No. 40/88. Unfortunately, there are always people who continue to advocate obsolete views, and there is no universal prescription for the treatment of blindness, fanaticism and demagogy. For years people of this kind demonstrated "monolithic unity" in the struggle against "kulaks," "spies" and "the enemies of the people." Now that a ray of hope that we can escape the legacy of the past has appeared they are nostalgic for the days of Stalin and Beria.

I have long been thinking about how to deal with those who, on behalf of the people, call for summary punishments for our compatriots who hold divergent views. The only remedy, I think, is glasnost and democracy, the publication of all the documents of the years of terror, and the names of ruthless judges and investigators. Pluralism of opinions and the validity of arguments should be proved not by repression but by democratic persuasion.

We want more light. We want to see both the conductors and the performers. There must be no statute of limitation for butchers and their masters.

V. Selkov
Chukhlom village, Sysolsky District, Komi Autonomous Republic,
U.S.S.R.

■ Our press has latterly been much preoccupied with casting aspersions on Stalin and, hence, on the relevant period in the history of the state and the people, and consequently on myself. I do not want to say there were no bad things under Stalin. But there were definitely more good things: people worked conscientiously and creatively, and the state had appreciable successes in its development. I am older than Ivan Shekhovtsov (see "Attempt to whitewash Stalin fails," issue No. 40/88) and do not know him personally, but I support his point of view.

I agree that we did not live well in those years. We were subordinated not only to Stalin's will, but also to the conditions of the time. We did not grumble, but worked conscientiously and defended our homeland. There was an atmosphere of enthusiasm for labour and moral uplift. Today a large proportion of the administrative apparatus is dead wood, a heavy burden on the shoulders of the people.

About ten per cent of executives should be subjected to repression immediately and some forty per cent, if they do not want to work properly, should be exiled to avoid another period of stagnation. Then there will be discipline, and perestroika will succeed. The present leniency will not help introduce proper order.

I think that in the seventy years of Soviet government real progress was only to be witnessed under Stalin, and if we want perestroika to be successful, repressions should be continued in some measure.

Ivan Sosedko
Zverevo, Rostov Region,
U.S.S.R.

■ I was born in 1917, served as a political officer in the army, and joined the Communist Party in 1939. When the war broke out, I was on the Western Front and experienced the powerful attack of the nazi army. I was injured and found myself in the enemy's rear, but managed to break out of encirclement in the autumn, with my weapons, Party card and identity card as a Soviet Army officer.

GLASNOST

Two months later I was arrested by order of the man with whose name on the lips my companions in arms had fought and died. The investigation was conducted by Smushkevich, as well as by Groshnikov and Demchenko. All the prisoners referred to Demchenko simply as a "butcher." During the interrogations he beat me till I lost consciousness. He tortured me and put my fingers in the jamb and then slammed the door on them.

The "troika" sentenced me to ten years in camp and another five years in exile. I was only rehabilitated in 1956.

Shekhovtsov, a retired prosecutor, has no moral right whatever to accuse the critics of Stalin, because at that time there were no prosecutors ready to defend the rights of Soviet people. There were Stalinist prosecutors who worked hand in glove with the butchers.

This is my incomplete suit against Stalin and those who defend him.

A MATTER AT ISSUE

Siegfrid Seidel
Leipzig, G.D.R.

■ I fully share the view expressed by Leonid Goldin in issue No.33/88. Wisdom and tolerance are needed when the political order and state system are discussed. This also applies to tackling economic problems. Progress in the economy is inadequate, because not even a fraction of the possibilities are used. References to bureaucrats no longer help. Soviet people continue to show apathy in almost everything, even in trifles.

For instance, I recently visited an exhibition in the beautiful 20th-century Bauhaus Palace in the town of Dessau. On my way back I passed some substandard buildings that were in striking contrast with the Bauhaus Palace. To my great surprise, I learned that Soviet citizens lived in them. Does that mean that perestroika has not spread to them?

I don't believe they behave differently at home and look after the state of their houses and flats there when they don't do so here.

G. Peters
Dushanbe, U.S.S.R.

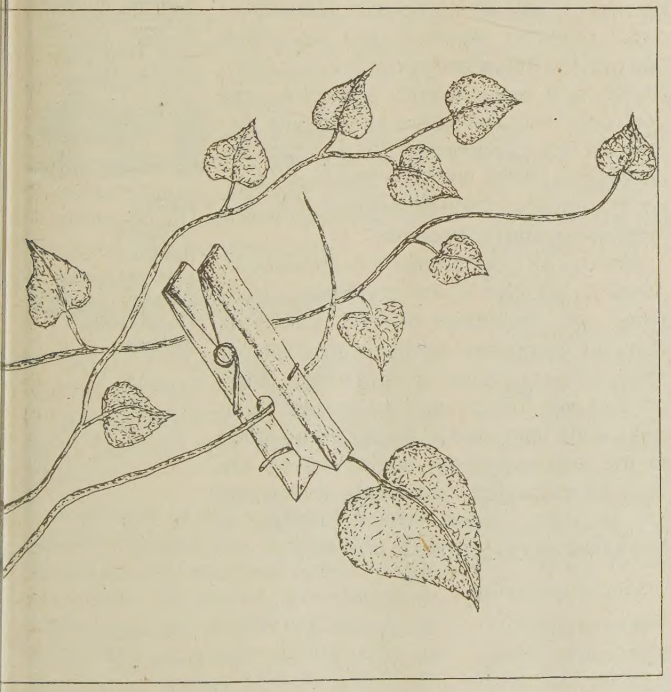
■ A woman member of the church of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Kiev recently received a letter signed by the secretary of the city Soviet of the Podol District. It reads in part: "In accordance with Article 9 of the instruction on the awarding of the Motherhood medal to mothers of large families, the executive committee of the Soviet has decided to refrain for two years from recommending you for this award due to the improper upbringing of your children, as you and your husband are active followers of religious cults and are bringing up your children in a religious spirit."

Doesn't the discriminatory spirit of Article 9 of the instruction contradict the present-day position of the state with regard to believers? If so, then isn't it time the instruction was revised?

From the editors.

The letter from Dushanbe was signed by G. Peters and 126 other people. It indicates, in our opinion, that the above-mentioned instruction runs counter to our concept of basic human rights. We would like to know the opinion of those who drew up this instruction.

AN ARTIST'S COMMENT



Drawing by Alexander Mitnik

GLASNOST

REPERCUSSIONS

S. Tseluiko,
commercial director of the cooperative scientific-research association Ecoculture,
Tula, U.S.S.R.

■ It was with great interest that I read a round-table discussion on ecology, "Time to repair the damage" (issue No.41/88). One of the participants in the discussion said that, in addition to government organizations in charge of environment protection, it would be no bad thing to have ecological coopertives and ... even joint-stock associations.

The very name of our association shows that such a cooperative has been founded. It is ready to carry out environment protection and ecological projects and support public organizations campaigning for a healthier environment. Our association elaborates ecologically clean technologies and resource-saving machines, and designs and produces foodstuffs and agricultural and medicinal raw materials free of harmful ingredients.

Our association also designs comprehensive cultural and ecological residential areas and can build and maintain them on a share basis. All the people cooperating with Ecoculture conclude labour agreements with it and receive remuneration for their work because, besides its direct purpose, ecology must also be economically profitable.

PRIVATE OPINION

QIAN QICHEN,
Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China

During my visit to the Soviet Union, I met three times with my counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze and was received by Mikhail Gorbachev. My talks in Moscow lasted in all for eight and a half hours. We discussed a wide range of issues, including Sino-Soviet relations and the present-day world situation. The discussion centred on the question of normalizing bilateral relations and on the Kampuchean problem.

The talks helped both sides to increase mutual understanding and find more points of contact. At the same time, issues remain on which talks should be continued. For this purpose, Eduard Shevardnadze will come to Peking early next year. An agreement was reached on the need to hold a Sino-Soviet summit meeting. It will take place in the first half of next year.

I am deeply satisfied with my meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev. It lasted an hour and forty minutes. The Soviet leader set out his views on international issues and described the progress of perestroika in his country. We took note of the fact that Mikhail Gorbachev is clearly in favour of normalizing Sino-Soviet relations. In his view, all the prerequisites exist for doing so. I had the impression that normalizing our relations is an important objective of Soviet foreign policy and a manifestation of the new thinking.

MARIE CLAIRE LOTHAIRE,
Council member, Women's Assembly for Peace and Well-being, Belgium

Frankly, I went to the international information meeting-dialogue "New Political Thinking and Women's Movement" in Moscow with great interest. This interest was explained in the first place by the fact that our meeting coincided with a Supreme Soviet session to approve important political changes in your country. These changes have a bearing on the main spheres of public life, in particular the political system and electoral procedure. After the explanations I received here I understood that your main objective now is to implement first political and then economic reforms.

At the meeting I was interested in the women's question in the Soviet republics, especially the Central Asian ones. I have got the impression from articles published in the Soviet press that the position of women in the Central Asian republics and in your country as a whole is not entirely satisfactory. You have a wonderful legislative system, women's councils and the necessary social structure to ensure the equality of women. We in Belgium do not have that. It only remains for you now to put this legislation into effect.

We participants in the meeting also found the discussion of the activity of the Women's International Democratic Federation, the 43rd anniversary of which was observed a few days ago, extremely useful. The point is that the federation has undergone considerable changes in the last few years. After the Second World War its members were full of enthusiasm and hope for the building of a new world. In the 1960s-70s the federation lost its significance. Many women refused to cooperate with it and joined pacifist and feminist organizations. The WIDF no longer influences the minds of young women. This situation should be remedied, of course, and I think the Moscow meeting will contribute to this.

IGOR ORLOV,
Rector of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute

Our institute is more and more actively using its right to establish direct contacts on the foreign market. At the beginning of 1988 we signed an agreement on direct scientific, technical and production ties with the Bulgarian economic association EMGE, and quite recently contracts were concluded with the optical instruments factories in Stara Zagora and Sliven, which are affiliated to EMGE. Work on these contracts has been started at the department of lighting engineering and light sources.

What do we stand to gain from this cooperation? In addition to the economic advantages, and knowledge of such notions as contract, licence and market, with which our specialists are not yet entirely familiar, direct contact with foreign partners enables us to reduce the time needed for the introduction of the high-technology equipment we are busy developing at our institute. In this way the research carried out in colleges is brought closer to the needs of industry.

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Keep progress towards a safer world going

Alexander Pumpyansky

"Gorbachev's in New York, so what?" a middle-aged gentleman, apparently an office employee, retorted with a grin, thus capping my sociological opinion poll on the spot

It looks as if I am not that kind of an interviewer, who can so brashly scan super-power public opinion at a New York street crossing. I think it better to leave that to my TV colleagues, so skilled in scouting out a homeless hobo on each Fifth Avenue and colouring what is palpably plain with the most incredible comments. Nor is there any point in my delving into detail, as that is the newspaperman's job. Whatever the case readers and televiewers already know what the Soviet leader said in the U.N., how he met the outgoing and in-coming Presidents, and what he discussed with U.S. businessmen, intellectuals and New Yorkers.

New York is the most spectacular setting one could imagine. A megalopolis, the incarnation of American drive and enterprise and of American ingenuity. International intersection No. 1. The focus of fantastic achievements and as fantastic problems. All this, moreover, lit up by the Christmas razzle-dazzle. Such the backdrop to the Soviet leader's visit. Yet let us speak not about New York and its hustle and bustle, but rather about what is going on in our two countries and throughout the world generally.

What for? Why now?

Though I suppose I should have started with the U.N. I shall talk rather from the American angle, as being on the spot. So to the visit: what for, and why now?

America is having a change of guard. President Reagan is on the way out, while President-elect Bush is only preparing to take office. The former can no longer do much, the latter is still not able to do much. No dual power this but rather an interregnum, a moratorium on action until January 20 next. Bush already holds the mandate for logical continuity. However, each new president has his own style: hence the 41st president must have time to adapt to the rarefied air at the presidential peak.

American political tradition says he should wait and see. But can problems be pigeonholed? Will time wait?

Comparisons suggest themselves. This New York meeting reminds me of Reykjavik. The picture was similar: a surprise announcement and a plethora of doubts before and, incidentally, after, with meaningful discussions as to whether this is a summit or just a preparatory working step. Actually Reykjavik signified if not the emergence of the concept of a nuclear-free world than at least its projection by the leaders of the two hitherto antagonistic powers. It was a point of historic significance, the point of departure in our efforts to define the progress reached.

The year-old Washington summit and INF Treaty were of fundamental significance. The May-June Moscow summit offered a shining symbol; the author of the "evil empire" definitions publicly interred it at the foot of the Kremlin wall; ratification of the INF Treaty came simultaneously.

However the chief hope did not materialize; the treaty on a 50 per cent reduction in strategic systems still awaits signature. Though this had perhaps been too much to hope for, it is difficult to shake off the impression, when observing the ongoing Soviet-American negotiations, that there seems to be a spanner in the works. Motion continues, but could this not be due to inertia? And what is going to come next?

Of course, the U.S. election campaign set the tone. On the other hand, it must be noted that the slackening grinds the axe of quarters hoping to bring matters to a complete standstill. America's conservatives have not changed; they still think that the Soviet-American accords have gone too far and that it would be better to revert to pre-Reykjavik glaciation. For their part the West European "deterrent fundamentalists" have also rushed to call for a swing back in the form of "compensation" for dismantled missiles. Repetition of the basic malady of recent decades, when the development of new weaponry and the dynamism of armament outpaced disarmament talks, may occur.

Can time wait?

The Gorbachev visit is a way of keeping the clock ticking. At a time when Americans lack initiative, the Soviet leader has taken up the challenge. This is a temperamental attempt to sustain the ongoing process, to proceed along the road keynoted by the Geneva, Reykjavik, Washington and Moscow milestones and prevent any erosion of what has been reached.

As natural is the wish to say good-bye to Ronald Reagan with whom not only an entire chapter of confrontation, but also the beginnings of cooperation are personally associated. As obvious is the desire to become better acquainted with George Bush, as the man with whom business will have to be done now. What dominates is the desire to see the continuity maintained as the Reagan administration transfers powers to the new Bush administration. Mikhail Gorbachev has rolled up his sleeves to build a bridge not between outgoing and in-coming presidents, but between yesterday and tomorrow.

What has entitled him to do that?

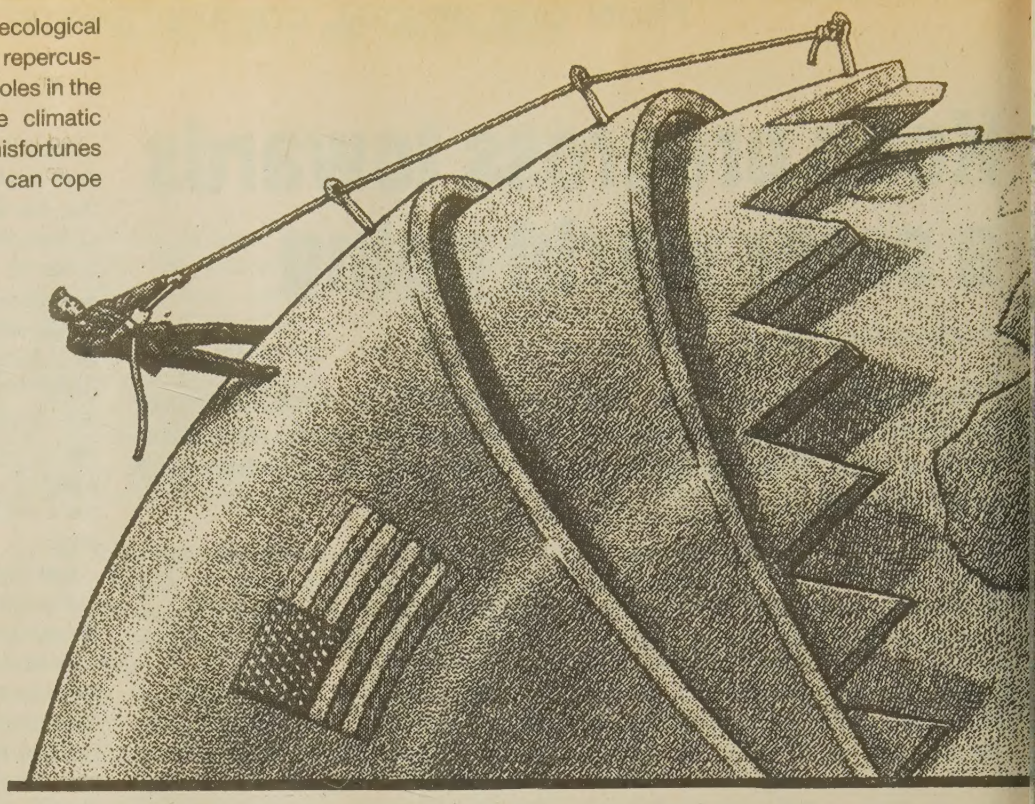
I think there are two answers.

Mandated by the human race

The first answer stems from the U.N. General Assembly meeting hall which once so roomy, now reaffirms the old, yet ever young truth, that the world is a small place.

Indeed, the world is becoming ever smaller, because though it does not have enough with which to feed everyone, it has more than enough for an overkill. The world is becoming smaller, due to that

chain reaction causing each ecological eruption to have world-wide repercussions in a radio-active cloud, holes in the ozone layer or unpredictable climatic changes. These common misfortunes and menaces, with which we can cope only if we all pull together make of us, willy-nilly, one common human race. But why to resist what humanitarians of every day and age have dreamed of? Surely it is high time for us to unite in one human race by accord and realize that we are truly elements of a multifaced but single world, wherein divergence is no sin that needs be eradicated, no poverty that needs cause the embarrassment of shame, but a richness, a source of development.



The new thinking is in effect the awareness that we are one human race. All the rest is derivative. Radical disarmament in virtually every area is most topical as guns are already beginning to fire of their own accord – as occurred recently aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz, when one of its aircraft involuntarily gunned its neighbour. The day dream of a nuclear-free, non-violent world is materializing, while security is becoming a joint venture not something based on the desire to infringe upon the interets of others or threaten them. With nationalistic egotism destructive and futile, what is commonly human takes priority over class stakes. There is the freedom of choice, we have a common European home, and civilization's common values should equally apply to intellectual and material, as well as political spheres.

Where do we stand now? What point have we reached in realizing and resolving our global problems? Looking back at yesteryore with its "no, no, no" policy and overriding division of the world, we may say that we have come quite a distance. However, that is only the very beginning. The outgoing year has presented the unprecedented spectacle of the destruction of missiles. Yet missiles of medium and lesser range comprise but 5 per cent of the nuclear arsenal. Or take conventional armaments, which are becoming more and more unconventional, or the millions of troops with their swarms of aircraft, tanks and countertanks, all deployed in Europe, as if the Second World War ended only yesterday. The cold war bastions are deeply echeloned: they stand in a factually existing military confrontation, which has long become an anachronizm – some don't seem to realize that nowadays the might of a state does not depend on how many old tanks or even new missiles it may possess, that this does not automatically qualify it as being on the road of progress. Radical disarmament today is not pioneering the unknown: it is the vital need to put paid to the moribund past.

The Soviet leader's U.N. address was welcomed as fervent advocacy of the new thinking, as a call to realize the humanitarian values of politics, as a breakthrough to those realities of the 21st century which most sane-thinking people would like to see, as a breakthrough to that future for the human race, which must become its present already now.

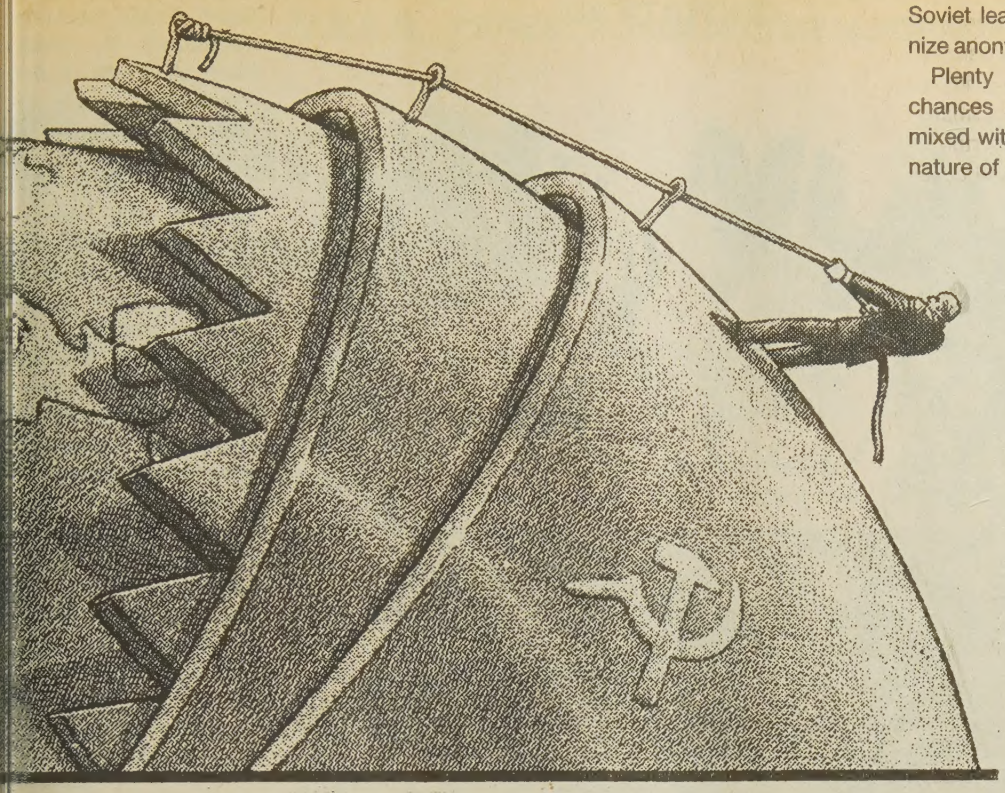
An essential facet of the Soviet perestroika is the search for a sweeping humanitarian programme in foreign policy. This enhanced the Soviet stance in the dialogue. The point is not a trial of strength, but a trial of humanitarian responsiveness.

Though at times politicians heatedly argue, they may also find points of contact as regards not only coincidental interests and objectives, but also common approaches. How does politics relate to ideology? Or idealism to realism? Emphasis on ideology in politics used to introduce intolerance and an element of fanaticism in international relations. However, the shedding of ideologies in politics does not at all imply the throwing out of ideals. It implies, no more, yet no less, renunciation of sclerosis-engendering propagandistic stereotypes. Idealism does not run counter to pragmatism. On the contrary, it may possibly be the supreme form of realism, as what can the ideal be if not a concentrated desire to resolve a cliff-hanging task of global significance.

Nobody, and no country for that matter, can claim to speak or act for the entire human race. However, all must seek to shoulder the mandate for a policy serving the interests of the entire human race. Precisely this mandated the Soviet leader to remind his counterparts in the U.S.A. that the hustings have come and gone, that they should not be trotted out any more, that it was high time for them to roll up their sleeves and get down to work!

Foreign policy begins at home

Though the mandate is employed internationally, it is endorsed at home.



Each Soviet-American summit has had its own performance. However, the watcher will have noticed that the really unpleasant occurred only when one side suddenly undertook to talk down to the other. That is unacceptable in world politics. We are all pupils in the school of the new thinking.

That the Soviet leader has captured American fancies as a personality in his own right was to be seen last year in Washington and now in New York. Nevertheless, the public cordiality derives from the fundamental changes in the American mentality, which stems exclusively from the fundamental changes in Soviet society.

Fear of the "Soviet threat" is disappearing. Indeed, however much we have termed it a myth, it represented a basic element of the Western mentality. Secrecy engenders myths. Hence, as soon as Moscow raised the veil, the myth melted. Glasnost is slaying fear of the "Soviet threat."

A defensive doctrine... the principle of sufficiency... non-offensive defence... confidence-building... All fine and useful elements of the new thinking in the military area. However, in the final analysis, they rest on the one and only really adequate measure of confidence that one open and democratic society naturally places in another open and democratic society. No wonder the domestic Soviet perestroika has developed into a major foreign policy factor, a factor for security no less effective than purely military means.

Given the wish, one may no doubt tally what democratic perestroika may imply in terms of tanks, missiles and divisions. However, there can be no doubt as to which is cheaper and far more pleasant. The democratic perestroika represents the basis for major genuinely radical disarmament measures, bilateral and unilateral. The further the democratic process expands, the greater the significance it will have likewise as a factor making for security. On the other hand, any setback for glasnost and perestroika may at once check the on-going movement to a safer weapon-free world.

The pivot of public debate in the U.S.A. is now decisively different. For decades the question was one of whether business could be done with the Reds or not. Anti-Sovietism served as political tender. Toughness meant a career. The arms race lobby had a field day when the vote was taken on budget appropriations for the Pentagon. Too often the answer was: "Better dead than Red."

Now the question is: "Should we help Gorbachev?" Soviet society's democratic reform is linked with the name of the Soviet leader. Americans do not recognize anonymity.

Plenty of doubt is voiced. As the chances are weighed, the optimism is mixed with pessimism. When the fragile nature of the process is noted, comparisons are drawn with the vast and neglected state of national, social and economic problems that need be tackled in one swoop. Politicians are scared, or scare others, that conservative resistance is still there. Businessmen are losing faith, though they do not become atheists, as soon as proposals for joint ventures are bogged down in the mysterious workings of Soviet bureaucracy and the elementary lack of business acumen. Encounters with Aeroflot and Intourist make tourists anti-Soviet. Every hangover of the shopworn authoritarian methods, be it in Moscow, Leningrad or Minsk, is grist to the mill of our opponents. Still most are inclined to say: "We should help Gorbachev."

At times we were prone to underestimate public opinion abroad, when it went against us. Don't poke your noses into our business, we snarled back, both appropriately and inappropriately. We ascribed all unpleasantness to hostile propaganda or inimical machinations. We qualified unacceptance as "wild fury." On the other hand there were times when by a quirk in our brains we transmuted this into "voices of approval." However, it seems to me we are at long last shedding that complex of exclusiveness or inferiority, that we are ridding ourselves of the psychology of the besieged or the forgotten. Despite the entire difference of social organization, we should never deny anybody common sense or the feeling of fairness or justice, as in the long run that will boomerang.

The world now favours perestroika as the return of common sense. Voting for democratic changes in the Soviet Union, it thus votes for further rapprochement between its two halves of East and West. Philosophically, Mikhail Gorbachev's eve-of-Christmas New York visit implies a powerful boost for this process, so vital to all of humanity.

"Gorbachev's in New York, so what?" I like the answer the first American I buttonholed gave.

NEW YORK

The drawing is reproduced from The New York Times (U.S.A.)

QUOTATIONS

Mieczyslaw Rakowski,
Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Poland:

■ I continue to be a proponent of glasnost and the democratization of our system. Our conditions differ from those in the Soviet Union. The process of democratization in our country has been in progress for some years, though advancing at a different rate. Our conservative forces were not organized to the extent that they are in the Soviet Union, for which they have had 70 years... Polish conservatism is to be found in the mentality of people, in their fear of the new, and their acceptance of the prevailing economic and social conditions. If we had a clear-cut conservative trend led by specific political figures we would have less trouble fighting it. An invisible opponent can only be fought by rationalizing the economy. That is why economic reforms top the list of my government's priorities.

Marlin Fitzwater,
assistant to the president for press relations

■ The United States and the Soviet Union have signed a grain contract, an extension of the current U.S.-Soviet grain agreement... The new contract fixes the minimum quota for Soviet imports of grain and oil-bearing crops from the U.S. at 9 million tons. Corn and wheat imports are to be no less than 4 million tons each. The new agreement will remain in force until December 31, 1990... The question of expediency in helping the Russian people from the social point of view had been decided prior to the new phase in relations established between Gorbachev and our President in the course of the summit meetings... Our position was clearly formulated: the export of grain and forage to the Soviet Union is expedient from a humanitarian point of view and doubtless from the angle of helping American farmers. This question had been decided before the present administration came to office in 1980. (Retranslated from the Russian).

– At any rate it's a mercy it's an ecological explosion, not a nuclear one!
Drawing by Vsevolod Arsenyev

Roland Dumas,
Foreign Minister, France

■ The U.N. is a peace forum and it is desirable that Yasser Arafat should have the opportunity to speak there on behalf of the Palestinian people to promote the cause of peace. Having signed the agreement on the siting of this international organization, the United States has thus committed itself to respecting the principle of free access to the United Nations. It is necessary to back the efforts of its Secretary-General so as to use all available opportunities for the solution of conflicts, and the restoration and consolidation of peace. I fear that the U.S. decision could check these efforts.

Hiroshi Nakajima,
WHO Director-General:

■ Unless measures are taken to stop the dissemination of the AIDS virus, there will be every grounds for anxiety in the immediate future. At present there are grounds to believe the number of AIDS-infected people to have reached 5 million. Thus the number of people with full-blown disease is expected to have topped a million by 1991.

I emphasize that thses figures have no direct link with the number of those infected in 1988 or later.

Preliminary results lead us to believe that in all probability 500,000 new-born babies will be infected with AIDS by early 1990s and that most of them will die before they are five years of age. Forecast models used by the WHO show that the overall number of all full-blown AIDS victims in Europe will be over 20,000 in 1988.This figure will grow to over 100,000 early in the 1990s. All these projections are certainly extraordinarily serious.

Continuity or change?

Gavriil Popov

The completion of the 12th (special) session of the Supreme Soviet marked the end of its mandate.

It is not just the end of a regular session; a whole historical period is past. We shall have no more such Supreme Soviets, no more such sessions, nor such deputies voting unanimously for any proposal. Perestroika has spread from the sphere of economics to that of politics, starting an actual dismantling of the administrative system. The positive significance of this step can hardly be overestimated.

Naturally, in the course of debates each of us was trying to defend the ideas that he thought most correct. But a debate is a debate, and it takes a lot of effort to make one's point in the course of one. When the Law on State Enterprise was discussed, we who supported the idea of the limited state contract, spent a lot of time making our case, but failed to persuade the majority. During the practical implementation of the law, however, it became clear that it needed some modifications as far as the state contract went.

The debate on the political reform concerning the structure of state bodies and the election of people's deputies might have been continued too. But a hundred thousand more proposals would hardly have changed anything. It was time for decision making.

The session reflected the line-up of forces in society. It demonstrated once more that the apparatus would go ahead with its own ideas of perestroika, no matter how many letters are sent to the top. Some criticize the higher echelons for procrastination in perestroika, others for this or that decision, but all appeal to the top. True perestroika, however, can only be the cause of the masses themselves.

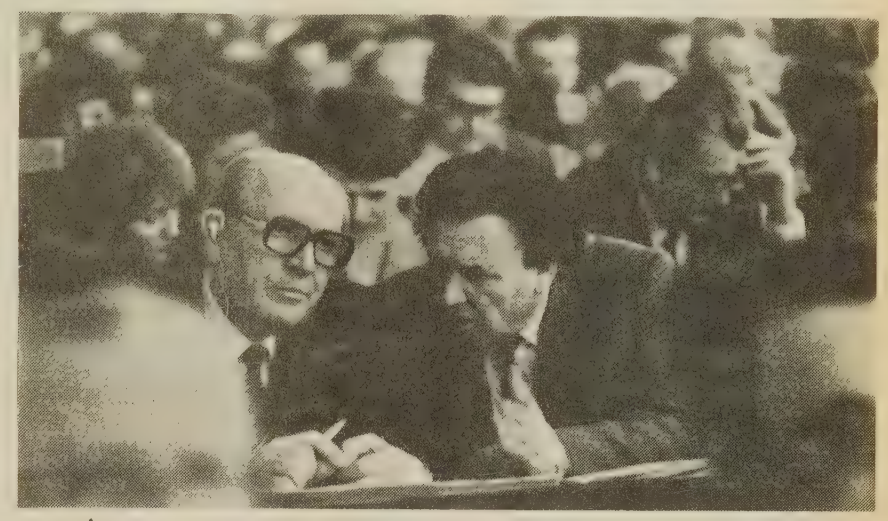
And the party has taken an absolutely correct step: that of shifting from arguments about wording (in which there is an a priori inequality in the position of those who write from "below" and those who consider these letters "at the top") to action. You are welcome to make your case during an election campaign. Rather than level criticism at the top, go to the electorate, make your point, persuade them and win at the ballot box.

As for those who object to certain formulations, I would like to tell them that these can be improved at a later date. I suspect that the famous Decree on Land of 1917 was not distinguished for the precision of its wording, but millions of peasants took it in their hands and translated it into reality. At the same time, I remember many brilliantly worded provisions of later times that never developed beyond the theoretical phase.

The resolutions adopted are important in that they shift onto a practical plane the decision as to what kind of perestroika we shall have. Now, both those who object to cooperatives and those who think that their activities are being unduly restricted will have to defend their views during the elections, choosing candidates and influencing their programmes rather than sending messages to the top. Now a secret ballot will determine the number of those who support this or that position and no one will any longer be able to make statements of the kind "the people will not understand, the people will not support, the working class maintains..." We now have the type of perestroika the masses are ready for!

Acclaiming the resolutions of the session, I cannot at the same time, approve of the fact that it again postponed the settlement of nationalities problems. Of course there is an order of priorities, and this order should preferably be observed. But experience is the main criterion. And what could possibly be more urgent than the problems that have made hundreds of thousands of people come out onto the streets?

We still perceive the activity of the masses in the old bureaucratic way. We would prefer to see it well-behaved.



At the session: making a point...

Photo by A. Khrupov

But the activity of the masses is indeed an activity. The forms it takes, its demonstrations and slogans – if it is genuine activity – will be a far cry from **apparatchiks'** ideas of good and bad. This activity will be what the masses are capable of after the personality cult, inertia, the crises of stagnation and the decades of being divorced from any real experience of government. So we should take the activity as it is and not shy away in panic from imperfect slogans, idealism and utopia.

We have before us the great example of Lenin who, unlike Plekhanov, could see behind the patriarchal and Utopian concepts of the Russian peasantry the only real force in Russia capable of wiping out, for the sake of its unrealistic ideals of abstract justice, the very real stronghold of tsarism.

Therefore I wouldn't say it was a good idea to have used, during the discussions of the ideas advanced by the Baltic republics, the same concept of state property as a single whole that for decades frustrated the idea of full economic cost

accounting. We can hardly regard it as evidence merely of nationalism when the population of the Baltic republics is trying to restrict influx from other republics, the more so as this kind of ban on Estonians, among others, has for decades been effectively enforced in issuing residence permits for Moscow.

Unfortunately, all the loathsome features of stalling have done the greatest harm to our republics in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, the regions least protected from these vices by the experience of the people and the experience of the intelligentsia. Though one can appreciate the reasons for the previous outburst of spontaneous resentment on the part of the peoples seeking the blood of those who had offended them, making a scapegoat of the people of a neighbouring republic will only benefit local bureaucrats and scoundrels.

It is they who, having lined their pockets at the expense of their peoples, are now fanning national strife, dismayed at the prospect of being brought to book for their crimes in the conditions of glasnost. Is it not partly through our fault that, rescuing such "leaders" from public trial, popular wrath was channelled across the borders of the republic? Is it not we who, clearly seeing the utter inability of the leaders in the two republics to come to terms over a constructive programme, went on conferring with people who, to all appearances, represent no one and are ready for the sake of retaining their posts to yield to their wildest slogans in their own republic on the one hand, and swear loyalty to Moscow on the other?

Civilized people in the 20th century cannot tolerate barbarism.

Even the United Nations steps in in conflicts where the sides have lost the ability to think and act clearly. The more so is interference justifiable in this situation, even involving troops to stave off massacre.

Alas, all this is not a solution of the problem. I wish that standing guard on the bridge between the Azerbaijanian and Armenian communities in Kirovobad were not Russian soldiers, but the people's deputies from the two republics who unhesitatingly left for the session of the Supreme Soviet, though everyone in the country would have appreciated their presence more in the squares of Yerevan and Baku than in the Kremlin. And if they do not have it in them, it is high time to find those who really have an influence over these two peoples, and begin talking to them and compel them to meet each other.

And so, no matter how complex activizing masses may prove, perestroika has no other alternatives.

Refugees – the tragedy of our day ... Would we be able to stop it?
TASS pho

Countering the conflict

Yuri Shevchenko

Even in the context of the growing spate of Soviet public activity, last week was most eventful. At an Extraordinary Session, the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet, the country's parliament, enacted new laws on constitutional amendments and elections of people's deputies.This was the culmination of the popular country-wide discussions on the wording of the new legislation. The proposals for political reform have now been put into effect.

However the session coincided with increasing tension in the Transcaucasian republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan and this did not pass unnoticed. It must be admitted that recently the situation has indeed assumed menacing proportions. Moscow-based newspapers report violece daily in the two republics, the roads between which are packed with refugees. Ethnic strife and hostility are being fanned by various power-hungry mafias. In the effort to protect peaceful civilians and forestall outrages, several soldiers in the law-enforcement divisions in Azerbaijan have been killed. This is over and above the civilian death toll, which the Ministry of the Interior press department put at 28 early this morning.

Though a state of emergency and curfew have been imposed in Baku and elsewhere in Azerbaijan, as well as in Yerevan, the pogroms, outrages, attack on buses carrying refugees, and th ethnic strife continue, with even childre and teenagers involved.

This cannot but give pain to every inte lectually honest Soviet man and womar

In a recent issue of the Armenian news paper Kommunist, a whole page wa given over to a detailed account of th violence. The mass media in Azerbaija feature similar reports. While one can ur derstand the human misery and th tragedy, it should also be observed tha the mass media in both republics seer obsessed with the tragic aspect, and ar not attempting to suggest a way out the senseless conflict. On the contrar they sometimes fan the reciprocate threats, abuse and animosity.

Though it is proper for a journalist t present the reader with an article, new item, sketch or interview, I am obliged t report on a conversation that did not tak place.

How come, I hear you ask. To afford a edifying example the editors of our pub cation decided to invite to our office while the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet was session, deputies from the two republi of Armenia and Azerbaijan to participa in a calm, businesslike discussion of th

tuation and of the proposals put forard for a settlement. Relying for ooperaton and assistance on the Mosow-based legations of the two republics, our reporters went to meet these deuties. However, none would agree to eet their conterparts from the other reublic. They refused to enter into the micable round-table conversation New mes had suggested.

If that is how the deputies from Arenia and Azerbaijan understand their uties and obligations, it is small wonder at the conflict continues.

However, where New Times failed the vernment succeeded. On December 1 ikhail Gorbachev and other Soviet leadrs met parliamentarians from the two reublics to discuss ways and means of abilizing the situation, defusing the tenon and building mutual confidence.

It has been found expedient to form a mmission of representatives of the two republics and Politbureau members of the CPSU Central Committee. This body has been given the responsibility of evolving the most acceptable, truly internationalist solution as soon as possible, without however modifying Nagorny Karabakh's territorial status. Its proposals will subsequently be put before the CPSU Cetral Committee, the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet, and the Soviet government.

In the meantime a government commission headed by B. Shcherbina, Vice-Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, has started on-the-spot operations to assist the refugees. The CPSU Central Committee and the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers have issued an edict "On flagrant violations of the constitutional rights of citizens of the Azerbaijanian S.S.R. and Armenian S.S.R." There is real determination to end the senseless conflict.

Cherish perestroika!

Vladimir Dudintsev

I do not believe that the calls to common sense now being addressed to Armenians and Azerbaijanians carry uch weight. Any appeal to the local inlligentsia or indeed to all people of good ense should be persuasive enough to ad one to make this or that decision hich, for its part, will make it clear who is ho... I fail to see, however, what kind of guments can be adduced, rather, a ood telling-off would seem to be in order but that will hardly do either. When exted nationalists are spoken to in their wn terms it only adds fuel to the tionalistic fire...

Since Russia has dared to assume the urden of being a big brother to other reublics (that was precisely what we once alled ourselves – Big Brother) we should ear certain grave responsibilities rather an become a third emotionally involved arty. Our duty is to sort things out...

The conflict can be ended, in my opinn, only if it is fairly investigated, going ght back to its sources. Besides being a eteran writer, I am also a long-standing raduate of law school. I am ready to operate with other figures in science, culture, and law to form a commission to work at the very centre of the conflict in order to be able to get to its roots and draw conclusions. This commission, like any other commission working on the conflict in Transcaucasia, needs independently-minded persons free of ambition. I venture to say that we are pursuing sacred goals without any saints to help us. Recently, some officials who had discredited themselves were dismissed from their posts in Transcaucasia. There are a huge number of officeholders, however, who abuse power not less flagrantly and openly but, rather, on the quiet, who have even worse ambitions. I remember people like these attacking me for my book "Not By Bread Alone," and now they are persisting with disastrous projects in the face of public anger. I am afraid these are also the fish that are muddying the water of the once peilucid pond of nationalities relations...

There is no need to seek any special solutions to normalize the situation and impose order, since the course of glasnost and democratization declared by the party is the only lever necessary.

To be able to bear the burden of responsibility I have been talking about earlier, one needs a full quota of information. And what is happening now? The national press gives slanted, heavily censored information that can hardly be used as a basis on which to form an opinion. Sometimes I find in my letter-box a xeroxed 7-page publication entitled "Express Chronicle," giving an account of events in Transcaucasia. Why should this broadsheet and countless rumours be the sole sources of information? I read and hear things but I am not in a position to confirm whether they are true or false! All they do is dismay me. That we are well-informed is a fiction. This situation should be changed. I say: Armenians! Azerbaijanians! People of any nationality starting ethnic conflicts fraught with misfortunes and blood! Think: you had problems 40-50 years ago too. But then Stalin ruled, you knew fear, your energy was dormant, you could not dare raise you voices in protest... The process of de-Stalinization came up against many obstacles, but it was crowned with success. Thousands upon thousands of people have been rehabilitated, including Armenians and Azerbaijanians... Give due credit here to the efforts of your big brother, who put an end to Stalin's prison camps. Do you want to see them back, or to be suppressed again? I do not exaggerate. Feuds between nationalities feed off perestroika. Instead of going forward together with the great ophthalmologist Fyodorov, the great muzhik Sivkov, from Archangel, our courageous journalists, economists, philosophers, government and party figures, you give fuel to those who stand in the way of progress – Stalinists, Andreyeva, ex-prosecutor Shekhovtsov, who sued Ales Adamovich... The forces of resistance are formidable, they are looking for arguments to halt perestroika, to force all its captains in to retirement, and some to prison for 15 years or so... What is happening in Transcaucasia and the Baltic republics – I have in mind the excesses, nothing else – gives them grounds to say: "Look what you have driven the country to..."

I have great respect for the people who, using the opportunities perestroika offers, are working for the common good, for perestroika. Others are helping the Stalinists to collect "evidence." I appeal to the people of Transcaucasia: use the opportunities perestroika gives you today – you did not have them before! First use these opportunities, win the benefits they offer! Tomorrow perestroika will enter the next phase and many of your expectations will have been realized at higher levels of democracy. This is the way to work for progress... ■

Time to gather stones

Can Israel and the Arabs live in peace? A personal analysis of a complex international problem, and a concrete proposal

Ranko Petkovic,
Yugoslav journalist

The formation of the state of Israel in 1948 was perceived by the Arabs as an infringement on their historical, territorial and ethnic rights. Rejecting any compromise, the Arabs proclaimed that Israel should be "pushed into the sea."

In the 40 years that followed the Arabs have not only failed to "push Israel into the sea," but have themselves lost a large part of their territories to it in the course of five Arab-Israeli wars.

How has the Arabs' attitude to Israel changed over the years?

First of all, they have had to agree, or become resigned, to the existence of the state of Israel. Some have even recognized it officially and almost all have recognized it de facto. Many different factors have brought about this cardinal change.

Instead of a state "created artificially" in the middle of a sun-scorched desert, which many predicted would fall apart like a house of cards, there emerged a state with all the attributes of a highly organized society, and which, moreover, possessed the strongest army in that part of the world.

The fact that Israel enjoyed financial and military assistance and backing of the U.S. and some other Western countries was in many ways decisive for the balance of forces in the Middle East.

For a long time the rejection of Israel was the chief factor cementing Arab unity. Today there are no illusions about a united Arab front against Israel and the ability of the Arab countries to gain the upper hand over Israel, backed as it is by the United States and the powerful world Zionist lobby.

In the end, whether the Arabs wanted it or not, they have had to face the political fact that compromise in Arab-Israeli relations is necessary and inevitable.

Whatever the cost, whatever psychological traumas it may cause, realizing this is pivotal for the settlement of the Middle East problem. To my mind the Arabs have already come to the conclusion that the Middle East problem can only be resolved peacefully and through an international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the great powers.

What are the main Arab demands being made on Israel?

First. Israel must withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied after 1967, which means the West Bank of the River Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights. Also, Israel must annul the unlawful decision by which it abolished the internatioal status of Jerusalem and proclaimed it its capital.

Second. Israel must recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which implies its right to create a sovereign Palestinian state. The Israeli government should also accept the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Third. Israel should agree to the formula of a comprehensive Middle East settlement involving all parties concerned, including the PLO.

So far we have referred to the Arab stance as a single position. However, we will have to abandon the general concept of the "Arabs" as an integral whole as the past years have seen the emergence of a plurality of Arab approaches to a Middle East settlement.

The smallest group in the Arab world are those forces that stubbornly refuse to recognize the existence of the state of Israel and, accordingly, shy away from any dialogue with it. In their view, weapons is the only language of communication with the Israeli state.

At the same time, there are now forces in the Arab world that are ready to negotiate with Israel. This is true, in the first place, of Egypt, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. By entering into bilateral negotiations and establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, President Sadat of Egypt incurred the wrath of almost all the Arab countries. He was branded a traitor to the sacred Arab cause.

If you clear the "Egyptian phenomenon" of its emotional shell, the facts that remain are hard to challenge. Egypt – and only Egypt – has managed to recover the territories occupied by Israel. Moreover it has relieved itself of the burden of military and other confrontation with Israel. The current Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has pursued a flexible policy that has smoothed over the principal adverse consequences of the Camp David accords.

The majority of the Arab eastern states and the PLO have worked out a coordinated position vis-à-vis Israel and presented it at the Arab and non-aligned summits. Looking at its principal components one can see that the Arab world considers the following to be the indispensable conditions for reconciliation: Israel's return of occupied territories, the restoration of the international status of Jerusalem, official recognition of the PLO and the self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Both the Arab and Palestinian positions have been undergoing further evolution of late. An international conference for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East appears to be the only rational and realistic way to ensure Arabs' and Palestinians' rights and interests, to achieve an all-embracing and lasting settlement in the Middle East based on respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the countries of the region.

Finally, a move of crucial importance was made last November: having proclaimed an independent state of Palestine the Palestine National Council recognized, at the same time, the Security Council's Resolutions Nos. 242 and 33 which call upon Israel to withdrww it

Ranko Petkovic, Editor-in-Chief of the magazine Medjunarodna politika, Belgrade

onfrontation. Palestinian freedom fighters...

oops from the territories it has been eeping since 1967 and which guarantee l the countries of the region, Israel in- uded, complete security. Con- equently, the Palestinians have recog- ed Israel as a state.

Having taken such a stand, the Arabs ave extended a hand of reconciliation to rael. Will the latter accept it?

srael and the Arabs

Can the Israelis accept peace and oexistence with the Arabs as a result of long-term Middle East settlement, and so, on what terms?

The Jews consider Israel to be their istorical homeland.

There may have been those who oubted that a Jewish state in the Middle ast could exist and consolidate itself here were some doubters even among ne Jews). Today hardly anyone doubts it. ver the past 40 years the Jews in Israel ave proved that they are capable of reating a viable state, a society that can chieve progress.

At the same time, the country per- eives a threat on the part of all its Arab eighbours. But isn't this threat an idée xe rooted in the history of the Jewish eople, who have been subjected to pog- oms and exile down the ages? Or could be just an excuse to justify the forcible cquisition of Arab territories?

Most Israelis believe that "those rabs" would long have "pushed Israel nto the sea" if they could, and that if they haven't done so, it is due to the military strength of the Isreali state.

The Israelis believe that their country's security is also threatened by the fact that the Arabs are unwilling and unprepared for peaceful coexistence with Israel.

However, there is no unanimity among Israelis on many specific issues. This gives rise to arguments, even feuds.

The first major split in Israeli public opinion was over the stand the country should take with regard to the Arab world. Some people believe that peace and coexistence with all Arabs, including Palestinians, and the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, are not only possible but inevitable. Some think that peace and coexistence are only possible and necessary with those Arab countries which, like Egypt and Jordan, have demonstrated that they are capable of maintaining correct relations with Israel.

Yet others believe that Israel can only live in peace with the Arabs by keeping them at a distance, at arm's length, and that this can be achieved through military superiority only.

The second big division in Israeli public opinion occurred over the attitude to the territory the Israeli state has occupied in the course of the numerous Arab-Israeli wars. Subsequently, the Sinai peninsula was returned to Egypt, but Israel retained the West Bank Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

The third major split in Israeli public opinion was over the demographic problems confronting the Israeli state. According to official figures, Israel's population now stands at 4.3 million, of which 3.5 million (82 per cent) are Jews and 800,000 (18 per cent) are Arabs, Druzes and others. In addition, more than 800,000 Arabs live on the West Bank of the Jordan and more than 475,000 in the Gaza Strip, according to Arab sources. The Arab population is growing much faster than the Jewish.

Finally, there are acute differences in the Israeli body politic about the holding of an international peace conference on the Middle East.

Likud and other right-wing groupings oppose an international conference on the Middle East for four main reasons. First, because it could impose decisions that run counter to Israel's vital interests as they see them. Second, the question could arise of jurisdiction over areas Israel considers an inalienable part of its territory. Third, the conference would involve a broad circle of countries in regional issues that concern only Israel and its neighbours. Fourth, the agenda would include the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization and hence the Palestinians' right to self-determination. In rejecting an international Middle East peace conference, the right favour bilateral talks with the Arab countries on disputed regional problems while ruling out the participation of the PLO.

The Israel Labour Party agrees, in principle, to the holding of an international confer-

Confrontation. Israeli soldiers charging rebel Palestinians

ence. The forces rallied around the party see the participation of the great powers and their brokerage as a guarantee that regional differences will be overcome, and the Arab-Israeli conflict solved on a constructive and realistic basis.

A minority of public opinion in Israel is demanding "peace now." This includes some influential people who favour a peaceful settlement that would enable Israelis to feel secure about their future.

Position of the world community

On November 29, 1947, when the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution on the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish and an Arab state on its territory (Jerusalem and the Holy places were given international status) the organization had 56 member countries. Thirty-three countries voted for, including the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., 13 voted against (mostly Arab and other Muslim states) with 10 abstentions (mostly the republics of Latin America).

The U.N. – the guardian of peace and security – could not afford to sit back and watch the Arabs and Israelis incessantly fighting each other. The United Nations acted by adopting resolutions and recommendations on the restoration of peace, the settlement of disputes through negotiations between all the parties concerned and ensuring the political independence and territorial integrity of all the states in the region. On the basis of these resolutions, the U.N. sent its representatives to the Middle East and set up peace-keeping forces. And yet, the U.N. has failed to bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The balance of forces in the U.N. on the Middle East crisis is profoundly influenced by the policy of blocs: the United States and the other Western countries have supported Israel, and the Soviet Union and the other socialist community countries have backed the Arabs. The admission of newly independent states to the United Nations has resulted in the U.N. increasingly supporting the Arab countries.

Nevertheless, the Arabs were still unhappy with the position of the United Nations, primarily because it has been unable to implement its resolutions on the return of Arab territories, and has proved unwilling and unable to curb or punish the aggressor.

Israel, too, is displeased with the United Nations, accusing the majority of its members of advocating Arab, and especially Palestinian, interests, of recognizing the Palestinians' right to their own state under the leadership of the PLO and of passing the 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism and calling it a form of racial discrimination.

There is probably no political issue that has attracted as much attention from the non-aligned countries as the Middle East crisis. In a nutshell, the stand of the non-aligned movement is to condemn Israel and pledge all-round support for the Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which, incidentally, was admitted to that movement in 1975.

The non-aligned movement has rejected attempts at a separate settlement of the Middle East crisis, believing that it cannot be resolved without solving the Palestinian question, the core of the whole problem.

In a world divided into blocs, the Western alliance has come down foursquare on Israel's side. For almost 25 years the U.S. and other Western countries have given aid and succor to Israel in its conflict with the Arab states. Support for Israel has been an integral part of American and Western confrontation with the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern bloc.

It was not until the 1970s that dramatic changes occurred in the attitude to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Several factors conspired to bring this about. Naturally, one cannot dismiss the impact of the oil crisis which showed how vital Arab oil was for the functioning of the European technological civilization. The evolution of the stand of the EEC countries has been symptomatic. The participants in the EEC summit in Venice in 1980 called on Israel to leave the occupied territories and a similar summit in Brussels in 1982 saw the EEC countries suspend their financial aid to Israel because it had invaded Lebanon.

Only the United States continued to render Israel all-round unconditional support.

All the socialist countries except Romania severed diplomatic relations with Israel after the 1967 war. The Soviet Union and other East European countries were considered the most reliable friends and allies of the Arabs in their conflict with Israel.

In my opinion, the recent contacts between the Soviet Union and Israel are to be seen in the context of Soviet political preparation for broader and more active participation in a Middle East settlement.

There are reasons for believing that against the background of an international conference on a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and Israel could be resumed.

No one in the Middle East has yet uttered the words "farewell to arms," but many are already prepared to say "welcome, peace."

What I propose: Permanent neutrality for Israel

How are we to find a way out of the most protracted regional conflict – the Middle East crisis – given the profound contradictions between the parties involved? Is there a way out?

I would suggest that a permanent status of neutrality for Israel could provide a key to solving the Middle East crisis.

Many would shake their heads and reply in the negative. And yet I am convinced that permanent Israeli neutrality is the only way to a just and final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What are the reasons for this conviction despite the fact that such an idea has not yet matured in political circles in the Arab countries or in Israel?

Permanent neutrality can be summed up by the following principal characteristics:

a) a permanently neutral state is under an obligation not to start and not to prosecute war under any circumstances other than self-defence;

b) the great powers and the other states are obliged to recognize and guarantee the political independence, territorial integrity and international legal status of a permanently neutral state.

The first permanently neutral state was Switzerland. Under the decisions of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), the country was offered international legal guarantees that the great powers would respect and protect its political independence and territorial integrity. Switzerland, in turn, committed itself, in the event of an armed conflict between the great powers and the neighbouring countries, not to offer its territory for the movement of the troops of any country.

After the Second World War, permanent neutrality was used as a key to solving the knotty problem of Austria. Austria was divided into four occupation zones and was thus one of the bastions of the cold war and international tensions. The granting of the status of permanent neutrality to Austria in 1955 turned it into an "oasis of peace" in Europe.

The status of permanent neutrality can only be established if the interests of the parties concerned coincide. The parties concerned are first and foremost the country whose neutrality is being proclaimed, then the neighbouring states which must recognize its status and, finally, the great powers, which must act as guarantors. What grounds are there for believing that the conflicting and even bitterly opposed interests of almost all the countries involved in the Middle East can gradually develop into a situation in which permanently neutral status for Israel will be not only desirable but possible?

First, neither Israel nor the Arab countries directly involved in the conflict have as yet succeeded in imposing their will or interests on the other side by force of arms. There is no reason to believe that any of them will succeed in doing so in the future.

Second, the elements of a separate or partial settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot provide a basis for lasting settlement in the Middle East because of the great number of "dramatis personae" involved in the conflict, the acute differences between their interests, the changes in the balance of forces, and other elements of instability and uncertainty in the region.

Third, no great power has succeeded in gaining undisputed supremacy in the Middle East.

We have approached a political and historical benchmark beyond which the understanding is at last beginning to prevail that it is necessary to put an end to extremist national claims and come up with a more flexible platform of good will and readiness to compromise. The new thinking has to some extent been displayed by individual parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

An international conference on the Middle East stands a good chance of settling a whole range of issues connected with the Arab-Israeli conflict, and thus defusing the tensions in that part of the world.

But there is a reverse to every coin, which suggests the question: can the concessions required from all the parties concerned, notably the Arabs and Israel, be a prerequisite for and guarantee of a durable and just peace in the hot sands of the Middle East, where "the day knows not what the night will bring"?

One can understand the apprehensions felt in some political quarters in Israel that the return of the occupied territories will some day fuel the ambitions of present or future Arab rulers, who might want to "push Israel into the sea." One can also understand the Arabs, who fear that their territorial integrity could again be in jeopardy because some circles in Israel are not disposed to relinquish the so-called Biblical boundaries of the Jewish state.

I think therefore that a lasting peace and calm can be established in the Middle East only by an international conference which, along with other moves and actions, would give Israel the status of permanent neutrality.

What would Israel gain from the status of permanent neutrality? It would secure guarantees of its political independence and territorial integrity on the part of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., guarantees that no state will dare attack it because the aggressor will have to deal with the great powers.

What would Israel's permanent neutrality bring the Arabs? The Arab countries would be assured that Israel will no longer lay claim to their territories because the status of a permanently neutral state makes it impossible to launch a war. If Israel is given such status it will, of course, have to return all the occupied Arab territories, which will make the newly proclaimed Palestinian state a viable proposition.

What does this spell for the great powers? An Arab-Israeli settlement on the basis of permanent neutrality for Israel will relieve the great powers of the heavy burden that has aggravated their relations.

To be sure, the idea of permanent neutrality should first of all win wide public support inside Israel itself. It is worth recalling that in the early postwar years Ben Gurion believed that non-alignment would be the best policy for Israel. It is hard to credit that the architect of the modern state of Israel came so close to an idea which now, after decades of trials and tribulations, is again becoming relevant. ■

A garden on the moon or a "shield" in orbit?

"In the field of space exploration Japan lags far behind developed countries, which is not commensurate to its actual potentialities"

An artist's impression of a 21st-century Japanese spaceship

Drawing from the Photo Japan magazine

This alarming note was sounded in a special report produced four years ago by a group of Japanese experts. Since then the country's space programme has changed greatly. Now 36 Japanese satellites are orbiting the near-earth space, which shows that Tokyo has outstripped major European countries in this race for technological prestige and is pushing to bolster and develop its success and in more than just civilian fields at that.

Challenging projects

The Pacific island of Tanega-Shima, located 1,000 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, has become a site for developing the space project. There the Japanese are busy expanding the space centre, building more launching pads and facilities for the assembly of spaceships. The development of a reliable carrier rocket remains so far a serious problem for Japanese designers. Having embarked on the development of a national rocket programme, Japan at first wholly relied on American ideas in this field. Created in 1969, the National Space Development Agency (NASDA) set itself a priority task of launching a satellite using the technology of the Delta rocket developed in the U.S. The three-stage No. 1 rocket, built on the basis of the Delta technology, was able to put into orbit geostationary satellites with a payload of 130 kg.

The following two generations of the carrier rockets, the H-1, successfully launched last year, as well as the H-2 due to go up in 1992, have been increasingly changing over to Japanese technology. As for the H-2, it will use Japanese-made components only, including a high-powered first-stage engine. The three-stage H-1, fully measuring up to the latest international standards, is capable of putting a 550-kg payload into geostationary orbit. With the H-2 having gone operational, Japan will be able to launch two-ton satellites. The director of the NASDA rocket development centre holds that the Japanese-made unmanned non-recoverable spacecraft surpass their counterparts manufactured by other countries.

The appearance of the H-2 will enable Tokyo to compete in the world market of delivery services in space. What is equally important is that McDonnell Douglas, a giant company from the U.S., is closely watching the development of this project, for if successful, the H-2 will be able to compete with the USAF Titan booster.

The successful completion of the H-2 project is associated in Japan with expectations for launching their own reusable spacecraft. While previously the Japanese space programme was geared to orbiting crews and materials by means of the American shuttles, now the NASDA is going to launch a mini-shuttle of its own.

Such bright prospects have caused a great stir among the Japanese... building companies and many of them are setting up specialized departments dealing with outer space aspects. They are working out a wide variety of projects, from toilets functioning in the conditions of weightlessness to veritable moon cities. A group of designers from the Ohbayashi company, for instance, has come up with the project of a recreation centre on the moon with hotels and a garden under a glass cover. The head of the company's outer space department, Takao Saito, is confident that the first batch of holidaymakers will appear there in around 2060. At the moment Tokyo is planning to send up in March 1996 a Japanese-made automatic station in the direction of Venus to study its atmosphere. This is probably the most feasible project which, if carried out, will enable Japan, in the words of the newspaper Nihon Keizai Shimbun, to outstrip Western Europe and come nearer to the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. in the exploration of the planets.

Japan's Defence Agency priorities

The military quarters are also paying special attention to the development of space projects. As is pointed out by the scientific analyst of the Asahi newspaper, Japan in recent years has made headway in such fields as rocket engineering and guidance systems which makes it possible to switch over the resultant technology to military purposes. That is why aerospace industry and primarily rocket development have become a major priority with the Japanese Defence Agency. This year rockets have absorbed 7.6 per cent of the budget allocation given for the purchase of military hardware.

The principal interest of the Self-Defence Forces as far as space exploration is concerned lies so far in the implemen-

Tiaki Mukai, one of the three candidates selected by the NASDA in 1985 for participation in U.S. Space Shuttle missions
Photo from The Japan Times newspaper

lation of the unified digital communication defence system programme whose purpose is a full-scale application of satellite communication for military purposes. Over 600 million dollars are expected to go for its implementation, which is meant to take 11 years. The project also provides for the building of 11 land stations throughout the country. The decision has been made that the Defence Agency will use the U.S. Super Bird communication satellite which is scheduled to be orbited by the Science Communications Corporation in April 1989.

The implementation of this programme will make it possible for the Defence Agency to create a communication satellite-aided air defence system. This step is a blatant violation of the resolution adopted in 1969 by Parliament whereby objects and rockets in outer space may only be used for peaceful purposes.

This is not the first time that Tokyo has not objected to military cooperation with Washington in space projects. To cite one more example, the recent multilateral negotiations on the development and use of an international orbital station. Apart from the U.S. and Japan, the project will involve the Europe Space Agency and Canada. Despite an extended list of participants in the project, the United States has evidently succeeded in persuading the partners to allow the Pentagon to use the American module of the station for its purposes.

The implementation of the digital communication programme and the indoctrination of the public opinion in Japan (on account of the U.S. Defence Department's involvement in the international orbital station project) coincided with the negotiations to get Tokyo to join the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). First Tokyo expressed its "understanding" with regard to the SDI research programme at the meeting of the two leaders in January 1985 and some one and a half years later the Japanese government, yielding to hard pressure from the United States, decided to take part in the "star wars" programme. Hardly a year had passed when a signing took place in Washington of the intergovernmental agreement on the terms of participation in the SDI, a programme designed to use nuclear power for military purposes, though the country's leaders swear solemnly to their commitment to the three non-nuclear principles.

Asian SDI

What made the U.S. administration so forcefully twist the arm of its Far Eastern ally? The simple reason is the foremost achievements made by Japanese companies which began to produce a number of systems patently surpassing their American counterparts, among them radars capable of tracking several supersonic rockets at once. According to the U.S. scientific consultative defence council, in the field of intergrated circuits the Japanese lead the world. It would be appropriate to recall after all that the U.S. Defence Department receives 40 per cent of its microcircuits from Japan and this proportion is increasing. The most important thing, however, is that in Japanese-made semiconductor chips, essential strategic material for the SDI, errors occur once in a million, that is ten times less than in similar U.S.-made products.

The bilateral agreement of 1983 makes the policy forbidding the export of military technologies not applicable to the United States. Snags occurred, however. For a long time the Mitsubishi Jukogyo company specializing in Defence Agency military supplies remained the only aspirant for the SDI programme. The reluctance of other Japanese corporations to join in could be explained by the simple fact that the agreement gave Washington the right to restrict information on any joint project thus depriving its most formidable economic rival of the opportunity to use technological achievements in civilian areas.

It took the Pentagon a lot of time and effort in the course of numerous talks to get Japanese business to become an active participant in the SDI programme, using all manner of promises (offering the Defence Agency the opportunity to take part in the joint project to develop "a balanced technological initiative" targeted on the creation of new non-nuclear weapons of superior accuracy) and threatening sanctions (concerning the Japanese microcircuit import).

At last Tokyo announced that a number of major arms manufacturers, including Mitsubishi Jukogyo, NEC, Fijutsu and Hitachi, together with their American partners, have presented a plan to the Pentagon for the realization of the Asian SDI to be approved. This project is part of the American Strategic Defence Initiative whose objective is to deploy an anti-missile shield over the Western Pacific.

The question of the Japanese "star wars" version came up for the first time late last year on the initiative of no other than the United States administration. Following that, numerous delegations of experts sent by the Pentagon to the Land of the Rising Sun were touting for the "advantages" of an ABM system to be deployed along the arch from the Aleutian to the Marianas islands, embracing Japan.

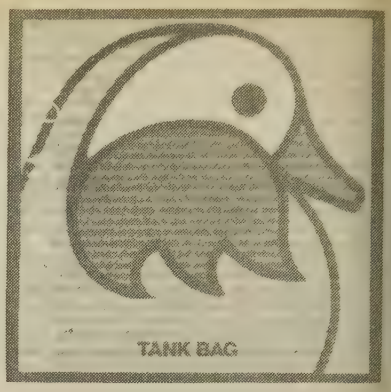
It is planned that an agreement on the establishment of a Japanese-American consortium will be signed which will integrate 14 electrical engineering firms. They are to develop a complex electronic monitoring system comprising land- and satellite-based radars. The range of its operation will cover a zone 500 kilometres off the "protected" territory. Drawing Tokyo into this space adventure Washington probably expects to launch a whole series of "theatre of military operations defence systems" that would cover the globe with the "umbrella" of such ABM systems.

Japan's active role in the Asian SDI may prove a powerful stimulus to arouse those forces which pin their hopes on the militarization of economy. Japanese companies are already prepared to offer the Pentagon self-homing weapons capable of destroying enemy missiles by means of electro-magnetic pulse. The new ground-to-air missiles the Japanese-American consortium is planning to deploy over a part of the Pacific Ocean, as Shigeaki Yamada, Mitsubishi Jukogyo's vice-president admits, may also go to arm the Self-Defence Forces.

The Asian version of the SDI not only runs counter to the Soviet-American ABM treaty but also has a direct bearing on the question of the security of many countries in the region.

Konstantin Deribas

Psychology of success



Success must not be exploited. This phrase struck me as odd: doesn't it make sense to make the most of one's success?

"That's what most people think," Signor Ugo Boccanera tactfully remarked.

Marketing director of the Plastimoda company since April 1986, Signor Ugo Boccanera was discussing, or rather explaining, the psychology of the modern manager. I was certainly getting my information straight from the horse's mouth. It all went smoothly until he pronounced the words: "Success mustn't be exploited..."

"Let me give you an example," the marketing director said, seeing my perplexity. "When I joined the company, it was doing rather well. Its Mandarina Duck bags and suit cases had a ready market. They were mainly models developed some years ago. The company was exploiting its success and was in danger of lapsing into inertia, damaging its prestige and losing its foothold on the market."

"And then, as marketing director, you suggested that Plastimoda's owners..."

"You overestimate me," Signor Boccanera interrupted. "The company offered me a responsible post, and in my new capacity I had ample opportunity to size up the situation. After I had learned what was what, the company's owners and executives invited me to cooperate in working out a new philosophy in manufacturing Mandarina Duck products, which boils down to continuous design modifications. My business experience told me that the company's road to future success lay in just this tactic."

"Business experience..." Realizing that such experience is not acquired by magic, I asked the prosperous 40-year-old manager about his education, and was greatly surprised to learn that he had become a manager almost by chance. His bank-teller mother and hotel-employee father did not contemplate a production manager's career for Ugo when they discussed their boy's further education after he had finished school. Finally, they decided on Rome University where Ugo Boccanera took a degree in applied mathematics. Later he went into teaching, which also had nothing to do with his future profession. But one day he decided to compete for admission to a prestigious higher school that trained experts in modern management techniques. The school made a manager out of the young teacher.

"It was an interesting but difficult year of study and fieldwork," Boccanera told me. "To put it in a nutshell, we were taught to 'create markets.' We were given an idea of commodity production, marketing and sales promotion techniques, and told how to run a company rationally and make business contacts."

"Did all this come in useful in your practical work later?"

"The institute where I studied, called ISTAO for short, is financed by entrepreneurs. They know better than anyone what kind of experts they need today or will need tomorrow, so our brains were not cluttered with superfluous information. Later my education was completed by practical experience as I went along in my life."

Ugo started out as an ordinary assistant in the Merloni industrial group, whose factories specialize in domestic electrical appliances. It took him only six years to go all the way up to marketing department chief. He largely owed his rapid progress, no doubt, to the mathematician in him who, to quote Boccanera himself, promptly synthesized all sorts of information and made instant decisions pertaining to the development of new products and the rational organization of marketing, market research, pricing or commodity range planning. Having started out in the Italian market as a manager, Boccanera now operates in the European and even world markets.

Plastimoda ranks as a medium-size company in Italy. Having emerged at the end of the 1960s, it now exports a third of its output. Licences for the manufacture of Mandarina Duck bags and suit cases have been sold to the U.S., Japan and Spain. The company has opened stores in Paris, Barcelona, Hongkong and Singapore, as well as in ten major Italian cities, including Milan, Venice, Turin, Rome and Florence. It intends further to strengthen its position on the market in the next three years. Ten more shops are to be opened abroad. Under a contract signed with the Soviet side in July 1988, a factory with an output capacity of 300,000 bags and cases a year has been built in Estonia. The company is planning its future trade policy with an eye to the coming liberalization of the West European market in 1992 and the inevitable toughening of competition.

"Life is full of surprises for a businessman," Ugo Boccanera told me, "so it's the job of managers to anticipate them scientifically, consulting economists, sociologists and psychologists. Whatever a manager does, he must never rest on his laurels lest he lose his professionalism, position and prestige."

In a word, theory should serve practical purposes rather than be an end in itself. I must say that the theory of management has become a science in its own right nowadays, and any attempt to explain what it is all about in journalistic terms would look amateurish, to put it mildly. So I prefer to dwell on some of Signor Boccanera's personal experiences as a manager. He spoke of his managerial problems with the utmost frankness.

"Take a classic situation: a designer tells me he has invented a bag the like of which is to be found nowhere else. Naturally, I'm interested. But unlike the designer, I have to weigh up the bag's chances of finding a market. A new product that is excellent in itself is only half the battle. It is supposed to bear the distinctive stamp of a Mandarina Duck product, intended for a specific, not an

Ugo Boccanera (left) and his colleagues.

abstract, category of buyers, and for the section of the market we have conquered rather than for the market at large. If we are to remain competitive, we must study the buyer and his tastes. Bags and suitcases are found in every home. Consequently, the problem is not to meet an acute need, but to offer the prospective buyer something that appeals to his eye, suits his specific requirements, and is within his means. This is where I start doing what I've been trained to do – creating the market.

Some resort to high-pressure sales talk. Others rely on the quality and convenience of their products as sales promotion factors. A product must have a 'winning personality,' so to speak, if it is to catch a discerning buyer's fancy..."

"How do you manage to get the buyer overcome the psychological barrier between outdated but conventional products and new-style ones?"

"Managers know many ways to win customers. He shouldn't stint money on advertizing. If cleverly presented, one or at most, two advantages of a new product can sell it. Another trick – I'll let you into a secret – is to give a bag to a celebrity, say an artist, or to a VIP as a gift. This will make the bag a much-coveted status symbol, I can assure you. Such is human psychology."

"One can only hope that a celebrity will turn the gift down if it is not in the best of taste, otherwise your judgement could be clouded..."

"Haven't I already told you," the marketing director hastily objected, "that I'm talking about manufacturers who depend on the quality of their products for sales. Besides, a company that enjoys a high reputation on the market goes all out to live up to it. What a company sells is not merely a product, but also a guarantee of the product's distinctive, special, often unique qualities. Therefore a manager sees to it that these qualities are 'built into' a product on the drawing boards, so that when it finally appears on the market, it should be judged on its merits."

"It sounds like a fascinating job. I wish I'd done something of the sort myself. But is it really plain sailing all the way? Don't even high-class managers have their share of setbacks and failures? It's a bit of a gamble, isn't it?"

"I admit we are running a certain amount of risk. But we never make spur-of-the-moment decisions. We always weigh all the pros and cons. I don't like the word failure as it presupposes dependence on luck. We depend on knowledge and professionalism, not sheer luck. No one is guaranteed against mistakes, of course, but one ought to do one's level best to avoid them by making realistic plans, knowing exactly the limits to what one's company can do, and getting along with employees. A manager worth his salt never sits it out in the trenches; he invites suggestions, works out the company's tactics and strategy and talks the owners into the need to take risks together."

The company of which Signor Boccanera is marketing director has come up with a programme for the period up to the year 1992, which consists of five chapters: Business, Personnel, Communications, Products, Organization, Management. Under "Personnel," we read: "Hiring highly efficient managers always abreast of the situation on the world market is a top priority."

This phrase may explain the success of the typical Italian business manager named Ugo Boccanera. Estonian experts are going to see a lot of him. And then, who knows... The Soviet market is vast.

Pavel Negoitsa,
Trud and our own correspondent
BOLOGNA-ROME

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Reassessing sham values

Vladimir Kulistikov

The meeting in Taif: what next?

First Deputy Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R. and Ambassador to the Republic of Afghanistan Yuli Vorontsov has been meeting in Taif, Saudi Arabia, with the representative of the militant wing of the Afghan opposition, Dr Burhanuddin Rabbani. The seven parties of the irreconcilable wing of the Afghan opposition are based in Peshawar, Pakistan. That event would only recently have seemed quite incredible. There were many arguments against any contact of the kind. It was pointed out that the armed opposition is not really important, that those who arm it are, that the armed opposition is not interested in meaningful negotiations, and that the Peshawar émigrés do not control armed groups within the country and have no political clout.

Three months ago I got a firsthand impression of the problem in Islamabad, where I interviewed two leaders of the militant opposition. I realized that our diplomats had good reason to query their credibility, but it seemed to me that the anathema hurled at the mujahedeen covered up for a complacency that was quite out of place. The Geneva formula was held up as the only possible, and more importantly, quite sufficient vehicle for settling the Afghan problem.

As is known a formula does not cover the internal aspects of the settlement, nor can it cover them. It makes no provision for our POWs, a problem that concerns us all. In a scholarly journal, I came across a detailed explanation of this: under international law the mujahedeen and the U.S.S.R. cannot be viewed as warring parties. International law is of course right, but that is no consolation to those whose near and dear ones have been taken prisoner in Afghanistan. Is endlessly repeating doctrinal arguments any way to bring about peace? It is far more important, as the recent statement of the Soviet Foreign Ministry says, that "over the past six months since the Geneva accords were signed a comprehensive settlement in Afghanistan has not been attained." Any procrastination in matters concerning a regional conflict is bound to bring about more casualties, or an entirely unpredictable outcome.

I do not intend to play down the importance of the Geneva accords, far from it. They work for peace in Afghanistan and provide a chance to put an end to foreign interference in the conflict. Their potential is far from having been exhausted, but at the same time it would be unwise to confine the search for peace to the Geneva formula alone. The ultimate task is not just to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan. I heard even from members of the Afghan opposition in Pakistan that the withdrawal of the limited military contingent is in itself no guarantee of an end to the bloodshed; the Soviet military presence has merely provided a backdrop against which a deep-rooted drama is being unravelled.

While men fight and die in Afghanistan, politicians are fighting against themselves. The dogmas and stereotypes arising from ill-conceived past decisions to rely on force die hard. The promptness and flexibility displayed by our diplomats today in approaching the Afghan problem are a sign that the process of discarding imaginary values has gathered momentum in our foreign policy as well. My own view is that this is due to the fact that for the first time in our history the search for a solution to an extremely complex problem is accompanied here by an open dialogue between the public and government. The statements made by the people at meetings and in the media prodded the diplomats on; the people do not care for the intricacies of diplomatic discourse, nor are they concerned that political figures who took wrong decisions and have now left the political scene will lose face. They thought above all of those who lose their lives and souls in Afghanistan; alas, our knowledge of the "veteran syndrome" is not now derived exclusively from U.S. movies. In the course of the nationwide campaign for the release of our boys in captivity we reminded ourselves that the supreme goal of policy is the good of the people, not the purity of a dogma.

Of course, our public is not concerned about our casualties alone. The mail this magazine is getting shows clearly that the public here do not want a hotbed of war to persist in Afghanistan after the Soviet troops have pulled out. That is why there is steady support in this country for the policy of national reconciliation. It follows from a statement issued by President Najibullah that Kabul has welcomed the direct contact between the Soviet Union and the leaders of the Peshawar opposition and expects a great deal of it. The Afghan government itself has been trying hard to establish a dialogue with armed groups within the country as it looks for ways of ending the conflict through scaling down confrontation.

A proposal on the calling of an international conference on Afghanistan which is coming from Kabul and is supported by Moscow and Delhi is a new chance for peace in the region. The conference could resolve problems of neutrality and demilitarization of the country. And it would be only logical for the U.N. Secretary-General to undertake the preparation for the conference since the General Assembly has entrusted him with the task of attaining a comprehensive political settlement. Constructive exchange of views between the Security Council members would be relevant as before.

In the course of history mankind has brought the technology of warfare to perfection, but there are no ready formulas for ending senseless bloodshed. If politicians were prepared to display at least a fraction of the courage displayed by soldiers on battlefields, I am sure there would be far greater chances of resolving international disputes peacefully. Recent history has demonstrated time and again that armed force is no way to deal with these disputes, but all sides will stand to gain from bold political operations like the diplomatic airlift to Taif.

Firsthand impressions

Medical service

In a romantic and philosophical poem the Russian poet Yaroslav Smelyakov wrote:

"If I fall sick, I shall not go to the doctor..."

It looks as if he has a large following in the Soviet Union. If they fall ill, many people will do practically anything to avoid going to their outpatient centre. They dislike the discomfort and endless queues. The registration clerks are surly, the nurses are overworked, and the doctors are overtaxed by an unceasing flow of patients and excessive paper work. You will spend hours before you see a doctor. Then later on you will have to get your doctor to certify that you are fit for work. As a result, you will waste another half a day. The mere mention of the word "hospital" makes one's flesh creep. Those who have been there know why. The unhygienic conditions, the poor food, the lack of essential medicines, the uncharitable and disinterested attendants. These and many other factors can nullify the most competent medical treatment.

We have spared neither time nor effort to reduce our public health service to such a state. The authorities evidently thought that the billions needed for such tempting projects as reversing the flow of rivers, creating giant dams on fertile plains, or building a pulp mill on the shores of Lake Baikal could be obtained by cutting back the allocations for social services, above all for public health. After all what is more important for the nation, an outpatient centre or a gigantic project no other country has? Far from arousing any misgivings, the idea of a unique project would urge them to build it. It was like a challenge. They would even make apple trees blossom on Mars! All you have to do is to bite into the finance allocated to the non-productive sphere. The main thing is to start work on the gigantic project and to receive regular bonuses for it. The fact that it might harm the environment or the health of the people is no concern of theirs.

This was the policy pursued for quite a long time. Incidentally, the high officials who put their signatures to these decisions had no inkling of the conditions at the outpatient centres. They were treated at the special medical services to which only a few had access. It took the revolutionary changes taking place in the country for the facts to be revealed of the disastrous situation in the sphere of public health.

Thanks to glasnost the statistics on infant mortality have been made public (the figures show that the situation in the Soviet Union is worse than in all the developed and many developing countries). It is just as bad as in the sphere of life expectancy. What's more it is even worse than it was before. Fortunately, much is being done to rectify the situation. Vast funds are being channelled into health care. New people have been put in charge. Surmounting formidable difficulties prominent figures in public health are introducing new forms of treatment, for example, the work being done by Svyatoslav Fyodorov, the "magician" in ophthalmology and economics. However, even today the smooth hand of the medical bureaucrat can stifle talent. Only a short while ago the TV and other media have given coverage of the famous physician, Dr Nikolai Kasyan, who has cured many patients from all over the country. He still treats his patients, in what could be described as a "hut" in Poltava Region in the Ukraine.

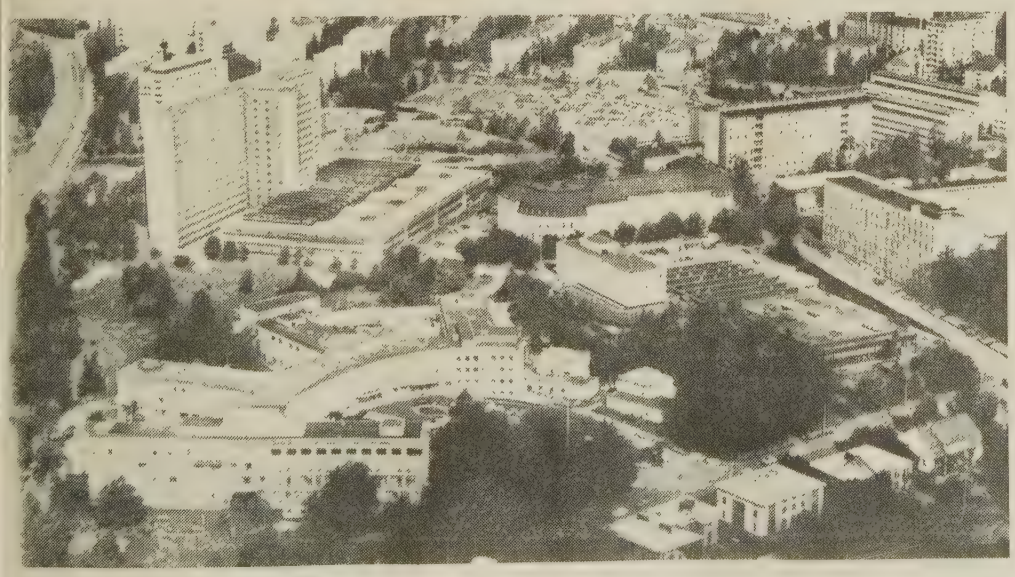
A great deal has to be done before Yaroslav Smelyakov's words are taken as poetry, rather than hard facts of life.

Continued from issues 45 and 48

A tour of Meilahti hospital

Marketta Pahikainen knows every corner of the huge building of Meilahti hospital, which is only a section of Helsinki University Central Hospital. It seemed as if every member of the hospital staff knew Marketta: she was exchanging greetings all the time. There is obviously no lack of personnel here. Take the emergency ward. Although it has 23 beds, it can handle up to fifty patients during the night when the demands are the heaviest. However, now, during the day, it is quiet, and the fifteen immaculate chromium plated wheelchairs stand peacefull folded. They are very sophisticated, with numerous gadgets and levers. The ward is staffed by 57 nurses and three doctors. Visiting consultants give specialist advice. As it is a training hospital the medical students also assist. Marketta further explained to me that out of the total number of nurses 40 are fully qualified and 17 are auxiliaries.

My guide is a senior nurse, and her explanations



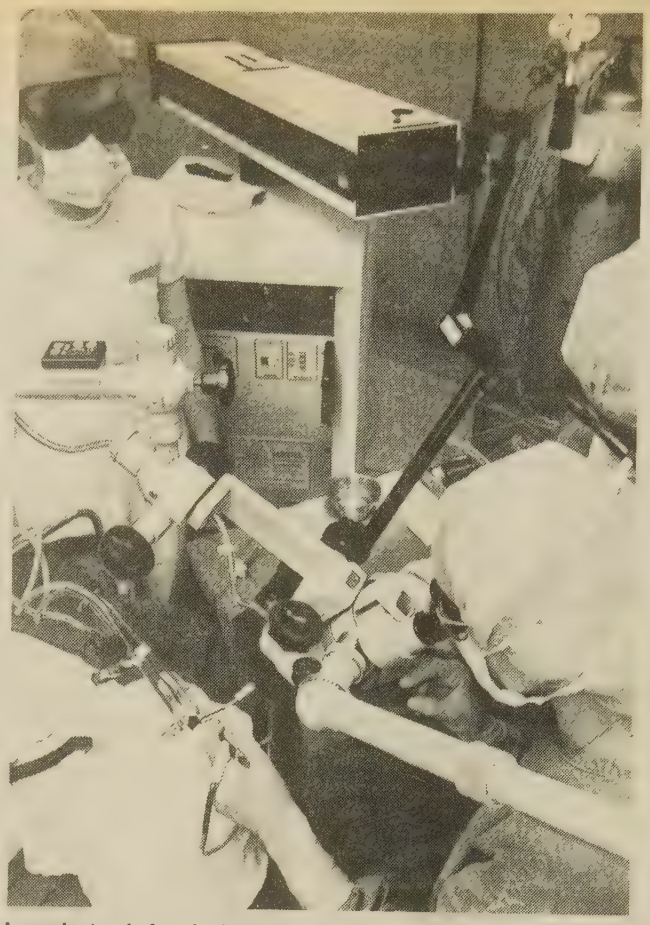
Helsinki University Central Hospital

are exact and explicit. She has many responsibilities. Meilahti hospital alone has three internal disease clinical departments, two surgical departments, pulmonary and neurological wards, institutes of anesthesiology, diagnostic and clinical radiology, and several other departments. I interrupted my guide with a question:

"How many nurses are there in the emergency ward at any given moment?"

"In the morning there are five or six nurses and four auxiliaries on duty," Marketta replied. "In the afternoon and in the evening there are five and four, and at night three and three."

My guide took me through numerous corridors and to some of the wards. The walls are painted in soft colours and there is plenty of light. The place is kept spotlessly clean as a hospital should be.



Laser instead of scalpel to perform an operation on the larynx

They obviously do not economize on cleaners here.

What does a day at Meilahti hospital cost a patient?

A day in the emergency ward costs 46 marks, and 55 marks in a ward.

Leo Witt, 61, a patient in the cancer ward, told me that a single-bed, hotel-class, private ward cost him just over 60 marks a day.

He calmly explained to me that he had leukemia. It appears they do not hide the truth from a cancer patient. Leo has already had five courses of treatment. There were three more to go. In between treatments he would go home to Kotka where he had worked as a road-building machine operator before he retired. He draws an adequate pension – 3,700 marks after tax. (I would like to mention that the official rate of exchange is four and a half marks to the dollar or seven marks to the ruble.) We wished Leo Witt a speedy recovery, and continued our tour of the hospital.

The senior nurse told me the actual cost of a day at the hospital was about 2,000 marks. This means that, even if Leo's pension was ten times greater, he would not have been able to cover the full cost of his treatment. Who covers the huge difference? The shareholders and the state.

The principal shareholder of the University Hospital is the Helsinki municipality. Together with the other municipalities, which are also among the shareholders, it covers 48 per cent of the current costs. Approximately 10 per cent of the funds needed come from other municipalities. Thirty-six per cent come from the state budget. Additional funds are raised from other sources. This enables a retired road-building machine operator to receive top-class treatment. This hospital does indeed provide such treatment. For instance, during this year ten heart transplant operations were performed at Meilahti hospital.

It is a fact that the best doctors alone cannot cure a patient in a hospital. The rudeness of a tired nurse or having to bribe a poorly paid attendant can nullify all a doctor has done. This is inconceivable at Meilahti hospital. Even in the largest wards the patients do not feel shy before each other. The comfortable beds are separated by curtains. Much has been done to make everything easier for the patients. For example, intravenous drips are fixed to a wheeled stand. So, in case of need, a patient can move about with the stand.

How many patients are there in a section?

"Twenty-five," Marketta said. "Eighteen in three six-bed wards and three in a three-bed ward. There is also one with two beds, and three private rooms."

That adds up to 26 beds (perhaps, one is a spare bed). However, in some departments there are 18-bed wards.

And what is the staff? Eight nurses, eight auxiliaries, a physician plus two specialists. Medical workers and their assistants are well paid. We discussed this in Marketta Pahikainen's office. The initial pay of a nurse is 5,588 marks a month. With yearly pay increases it rises to 6,655 marks in 15 years. A nurse on night duty from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. is entitled to a loading of 33 per cent an hour and on evening duty from 6 to 10 p.m. to 15 per cent loading with a double pay for a Sunday shift. With all the extras a nurse, who has just begun to work, nets 4,200 marks (after tax). Of course, the doctors are paid much more.

How many hours are there in a working week? Thirty-nine. Six months after you have been taken on the staff you have a right to 24 days' paid annual leave. Ten years later you are entitled to 30 days' leave in the summer months, plus six days in the "winter" months (from October to April). In another five years your annual paid leave will be extended correspondingly to 36 and nine days. Taking a holiday out of season is encouraged in every possible way, so that two summer days are equivalent to three days out of season. In addition, there is a holiday pay loading of approximately 15 per cent.

Where are nurses trained? At special colleges with a training period of two and a half years. The students have their practical training right here, at the University Hospital, while they are still studying. It ranges from six to twelve months. As we left the office, we saw a group of young girls and boys in white uniforms hurry past us in the wake of their young-looking supervisor. While he was speaking to them with an air of authority, they listened intently to every word he said. They know that the medical profession is not only humane and attractive, it is also prestigious. This is seen in the generous earnings of its members.

The cost of health

Finland has four other central university hospitals similar to Meilahti hospital in Turku, Tampere, Kuopio and Oulu. Each has several peripheral hospital centres and outpatient clinics. In addition, the country has 120 municipal hospitals and 220 health centres. Mikko Vienonen, a high-ranking official of the National Board of Health, gave me the details about the tasks of the medical service and its structure. He also told me about the health centres.

But first, a few words about the three-in-one job of the medical service in Fin-

nd. It covers the care of health through rotection of the environment, the protection of the health of the population, the eatment of patients by specialists.

The first job is to monitor the purity of ne atmosphere and quality of the water, prevent pollution of the environment ith poisonous industrial discharges, nd to effect control over the quality of oodstuffs and observance of the hygiene equirements at work places. The unicipalities employ some 2,000 qualied inspectors for the purpose.

Two hundred and twenty health entres with a staff of 50,000 provide regular medical services to ne population. These entres have outpatient epatments and hospials. Specialists receive atients at university nd municipal hospitals nd other specialized nedical establishments.

Mikko Vienonen went on to say that in ecent years the share f the gross national roduct spent on medical services has been teadily increasing. In 984 it accounted for 3 per cent and it now tands at 7 per cent. he number of doctors as also been increasng; in 1970 there was ne doctor for 1,100 people, in 1984 it was er 500 and now it is one for 450 people. This is the result of a law on the development of first aid medical services passed in 1972. A health centre is not necessarily a building or a medical complex. It is a local organization that provides first aid, it functions on the basis of the existing medical services, maternity and children's consultation clinics, outpatient clinics and hospital departments. As soon as the population of a district reaches 10,000 it is binding on the municipality to set up a health centre. In sparsely populated areas it is permitted to form such centres even if the number of inhabitants is smaller. Many municipalities have set up joint centres. These medical centres provide consultations by physicians free of charge. However, there are exceptions. For instance, for people over 17 it costs from 40 to 50 marks to visit a dentist, 10 marks to have a massage. A day at the hospital, including meals, medicine and, if necessary, an operation, costs from 45 to 55 marks. Treatment by a private doctor costs much more. A single visit ranges from 100 to 120 marks, with the state paying 30 per cent of this amount.

How much does a family have to spend on doctors? Mikko says:

"About two and a half per cent of their annual income. One fourth of the sum covers the cost of medicines. Though the chemists' shops are private, the government exercises control over them. The prices of medicines are fixed. A patient actually pays only half their cost, the remainder being covered by medical insurance. Persons suffering from a chronic illness get their medicines for no more than one tenth of the price and cancer cases receive them free. Another interesting fact is: if the principal of a chemist's shop retires on pension, a candidate to fill the vacancy is selected with the direct participation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health."

Mikko Vienonen believes that all these measures have helped secure the main achievements in three medical spheres.

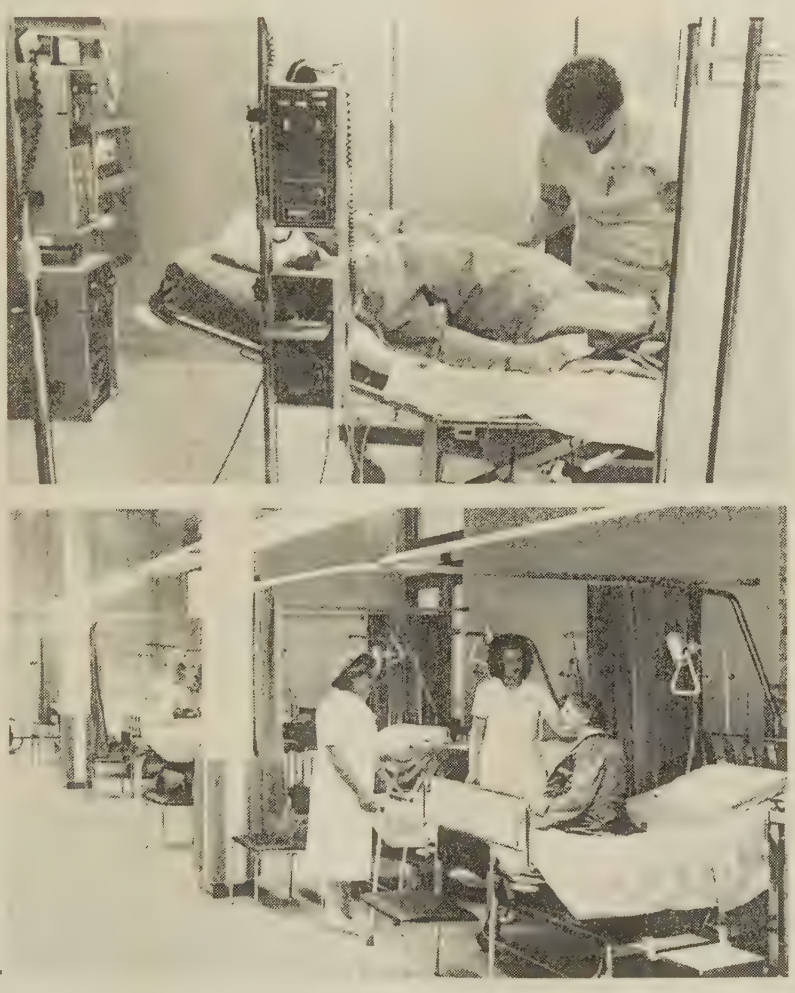
One of these is infantile mortality. In 1950 it was 50 per thousand, in 1960 it was 20 and last year it had fallen to 5.9. As a result, Finland has secured one of the leading places in the world in this respect. A radical improvement in the performance of maternity hospitals and their centralization has eradicated death during childbirth. In recent years only one to four cases have occurred in Finland.

Advanced methods in dentistry have considerably decreased the number of affected teeth per person. For instance, in 1975 the figure among 12-year olds was 6.9 and ten years later it was only 2.8.

Good progress has been made in the sphere of family planning. On a doctor's recommendation contraceptives are normally issued free of charge. The members of the medical profession are conducting educational work on a lagre scale in this sphere.

Mikko Vienonen says that there is still plenty of room for improvement. It would be highly desirable for every person to have his or her own personal doctor. When a patient goes to the health centre he is received by the doctor on duty. To give the doctors a greater sense of responsibility and, if necessary, to urge them to work longer hours, instead of locking up the office at 4 p.m., it would be expedient to increase their salaries. (At present a doctor earns 20,000 marks a month on the average.) Finland has a problem of filling vacancies with doctors at rural hospitals and health centres. It is necessary to train more physicians at institutes. It is not enough to make high-class specialists out of them. It is also necessary to train them as qualified managers. Summing up, Mikko Vienonen says that being a manager is essential for them to supervise the work of the health centres.

It is worth noting that Finland is one of the world's leading nations with respect to life expectancy. The organizers and workers of the Finnish public health system have made a large contribution to this achievement.



Meilahti hospital wards

Vladimir Zhitomirsky,
our special correspondent

HELSINKI – MOSCOW

Photos by the author and from a booklet issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

A democratic alternative for scientific and technological progress

Soyuz, a national self-supporting centre for scientific and technical services, was founded roughly six months ago. Its sponsor, the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies (USES) of the U.S.S.R., came into being a little earlier.

When I went to look at the centre with such a high-flown name (Soyuz means union), it turned out there was nothing to see so far. Its staff of nine people have no premises to work in. The centre is expected to get them soon. In any case, the district Soviet has promised that it will. But even with such a tiny staff and without premises, the centre is working, though not like ordinary research institutes. The backbone of Soyuz is made up of provisional creative work groups operating quite autonomously in different places.

Getting out of the vicious circle

Some of the world-famous companies producing computers and other sophisticated machines originated from one, two or three eccentric inventors working in a shed.

Perhaps Soyuz also has good prospects. In the opinion of its director, Professor **Vadim Krikorov,**U.S.S.R. State Prize winner, there is no need for haste in analyzing the efficiency of its work. Time will show what prospects the future holds for the centre.

It may be that no haste should indeed be made in the evaluation of economic results. We have burned our fingers more than once by trying to get an appreciable return on any innovation immediately and engaging in wishful thinking. The professor is also right for another reason: Soyuz and other self-supporting centres, and the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies itself, have not been set up to make a profit at all costs. The aim is far deeper and more serious. They should become a democratic alternative to narrow bureaucratic departmental approaches to problems of scientific and technological progress, a means of enhancing the prestige and hence the effectiveness of engineering work and create new possibilities for displaying people's creative abilities.

"Will the USES and Soyuz be able to cope with these tasks?" I asked.

"The USES, Soyuz and other similar centres will be unable to cope with these tasks if they are regarded as their concern alone," Professor Krikorov said. "But this is necessary for the whole of our society. Otherwise, the decelerating effect of the administrative-command system will not be overcome."

The aim is considerably to speed up the introduction of promising designs without waiting for the modernization of the engineering industry and the completion of the radical economic reform. The question is how to get out of the administrative-command system before it is abolished. Far from everyone understands that the mastering of new forms of economic activity is not made difficult by the ill will of individual executives alone. The very system of management rejects joint enterprises, cooperatives, provisional creative work groups and so on.

Let us take the research institutes set up in various industries. In the last few years the proportion of their work that could result in the designing of new-generation equipment has been steadily declining. The ministries on which research institutes depend and the enterprises with which they conclude economic agreements are often unwilling to finance research and development work because it is fraught with a certain risk. If the work proves successful, they can make a profit within a few years. But it is also likely to bring no results, and then the ministries and enterprises concerned will lose money.

The point is that there is no reason for and stimulus to risk. Enterprises are concerned with the fulfilment of their production plans, as on this depends their prosperity. It does not matter what will or will not happen much later, because by that time one or other official will have been dismissed and a ministry or institute closed, reorganized or merged with another. Where is the way out?

What can Soyuz do?

One of the ways out is to establish self-supporting centres of the Soyuz type. Such organizations do not have state plans and operate on a paying basis, receiving money from enterprises for their services. Enterprises may or may not apply to Soyuz. They have no moral or material commitments to it. For this reason the services of the centre should be advantageous to them.

Two equally important tasks have been set before Soyuz: to fulfil the current requests of the enterprises with which they conclude economic agreements and to create a promising reserve. The work of a second kind requires an experimental base, which is now being set up, and a special fund, to be raised soon. Promising research has been programmed from the outset, and Soyuz is going to begin it in the near future.

Risk and incentives

"What services does the centre render today?" I asked.

"We are now helping enterprises to optimize new technologies and master the production of new articles," Vadim Krikorov replied. "For instance, we are developing magnetic systems for instrument-making and radio electronics. Instead of scarce and expensive cobalt and samarium, we used manganese and aluminium in these systems. As a result, their cost has been considerably reduced. Dozens of enterprises have shown interest in this innovation, and Soyuz is now concluding agreements with them.

"Or take the method we have devised for the production of an active chemical agent and, with its aid, of a new film on the basis of ordinary polyethylene film.This increases the photo-effect of the new film. The use of this film in hotbeds makes vegetables ripen faster and increases their yields. Such a result is achieved thanks to the active chemical agent we have produced through a combination of rare-earth elements. We are devising a method of manufacturing it in the form of granules from rare-earth metal waste. We are trying to bring the manufacturing cost of the new film down to that of the mass-produced polyethylene film. Many countries, including Japan, have shown interest in our work.

"Now about a special fund to finance research work. This problem is solved in different ways in other countries, often on a national scale, as in Japan. In this country, the financing of research is envisaged

in the comprehensive programmes approved by the State Committee for Science and Technology. But this is 'in theory,' so to say, because money is often unavailable for this purpose. That is why Soyuz is raising its own fund. It is made up of deductions from the economic agreements the centre concludes with enterprises.

"The sum to be paid to a provisional creative work group is determined in a contract before work is started, when it is impossible to foresee whether and what kind of innovations will be made. A contract does not envisage incentives for the search for original, unforeseen solutions. This means that incentives must be created. There are different suggestions to this end. One of them is to set a quality coefficient. For instance, the R&D work surpassing the world standard fetches 3-4 times the usual. The standard is assessed by the scientific and technical council of the centre and by a customer.

"Soyuz intends to render scientific and technical services to all organizations, irrespective of their departmental links. The main service is accelerated development and the introduction of scientific and technological achievements. A creative work group is formed, for a term of up to one year, for the tackling of a concrete task. The pay is divided between members of a group in accordance with their contribution to the joint effort. Everyone capable of contributing to the solution of a given scientific and technical problem can take part in a provisional creative work group. A man does not have to ask for permission from his chiefs to work in such a group. This is important, because the chiefs are often reluctant to allow members of their staffs to work simultaneously in another place, even in their leisure hours. Why not impose a ban, if that is possible?

"The flexible economic basis on which the work of Soyuz is organized, free of superfluous bureaucratic links, enables it to cut almost by half the time needed for the development and introduction of technical innovations. This gain in time is achieved mainly because the self-supporting centre does not allow a gap between scientific research work and research and development work. We begin the second part of the job immediately after positive results have been achieved in the first one, without waiting till the production forms and records are drawn up, because it takes months or even years to do that. If this were even the only advantage of self-supporting centres of the Soyuz type, they would be more than justified economically."

A counterbalance to the monopoly

New Times asked Professor **Alexander Vladislavlev,** first secretary of the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies, to comment on our talk with Vadim Krikorov about the work of Soyuz. The professor believes that self-supporting centres of this kind have good prospects. Many such centres have been set up, and new ones are being formed everywhere. They have already developed and introduced many original technical ideas.

"The results of the work of these centres can be assessed pretty precisely," Vladislavlev said. "But that is not the main thing, because taken on a countrywide scale, they are not yet substantial. The main thing is that such centres, as well as the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies, are gradually becoming partners or, if you like, a counterbalance to the state apparatus, various departments, the monopoly of influential scientific schools on the truth in its highest instance, so to say.

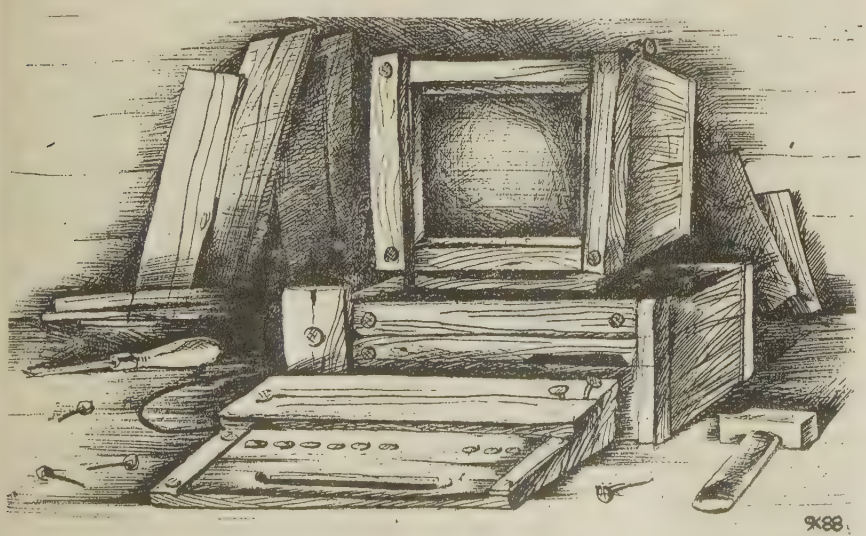
"The problems of the development of science and technology have always been complex and contradictory. How have they been tackled till now? A research institute was established for the tackling of one or other problem. Its staff was approved and a certain sum allocated for it from the budget. But then the problem was solved, or it turned out that it could not be solved or that it was not worth tackling it. However, the institute and its staff remained. It was entrusted with another job which it was often unable to do. The institute was adapted for the tackling of new problems, and its staff and budget were increased. It did not have a competitor, and therefore it was impossible to compare its effectiveness with anything. The situation is changing now.

"One of the real achievements of perestroika is the cooperative and cost-accounting movement in the fields of science and engineering. Within a short time provisional creative work groups, self-supporting centres of scientific, technical and engineering services, scientific-technical and producer cooperatives have undoubtedly demonstrated their viability and an ability to solve scientific, technical and production problems efficiently, qualitatively and, as it turned out, much more cheaply. They are winning public recognition and prestige. Skilled and authoritative specialists, such as Professor Krikorov and many others, are joining the movement.

"The centres and cooperatives are creating their material base, and the best of them are building their production facilities. A scientific and production enterprise of a new type is taking shape, one operating on cooperative and cost-accounting principles. The movement has shortcomings, and unscrupulous elements worm themselves into it. But it has good prospects. To make these prospects a reality, the movement should be given patient and willing assistance. It needs social protection, and the laws regulating it should be constantly updated. It is necessary to establish organized systems of information, training and international cooperation.

"This explains why the establishment of a national association of scientific and technical cooperative and self-supporting enterprises and organizations has become such an urgent issue, an imperative of our time. The ESES actively supports this intention on the part of the leaders of centres and cooperatives, and is prepared to give every possible assistance to a new organization, particularly to place the union's social infrastructure at its disposal.

"The more energetic is the partnership of the state system for directing scientific and technological progress and the politically protected opinion of professionals (scientists, engineers and production innovators united in the ESES), the more rapidly and harmoniously scientific and technical progress will develop in our country," Alexander Vladislavlev concluded. "And the more democratic the activity of the union is, the more effectively it will contribute to technological progress."



Drawing by Konstantin Yarikov

Alexander Guber

"The Ryabukha affair"

Early this year an emergency occured in the Valky District of the Kharkov Region.

One of the best collective farms in the region, Zavety Ilyicha, decided not to use the services of the regional agro-industrial association and its chairman Nikolai Ryabukha slashed its contributions to this organization's budget.

The rebellion was all the more unexpected since Nikolai Ryabukha is a conscientious worker and a level-headed man. Over the past twenty-two years his farm has slowly but steadily turned into one of the best in the region.

Extraordinary commissions, inspectors, and regional analysts became frequent visitors in the community of Sidorenkovo, the central estate of the farm. All of them were quick to point out that democratization and restructuring do not really mean anarchy. The staff of the agro-industrial association were especially angry, and some of them were just about to blow up Ryabukha's move into a "Ryabukha affair," but then came the National Congress of Collective Farmers, and Nikolai Ryabukha was delegated to it: after all, his farm accounts for the best grain yields and the highest milk yields and weight gains in the region. After the congress, many other collective farm chairmen in the region followed Ryabukha's example and even went as far as to insist on financial independence of that organization. It all ended with Ryabukha himself being elected... chairman of the association's council, a post he combined with his full-time job at his farm.

In this executive capacity this formerly level-headed and sedentary man changed beyond recognition. He cut the staff of the association, fired a few well-connected senior officials, causing a spate of complaints to various high authorities, filed a suit against the local agency concerned with the distribution of pesticides and herbicides over what he viewed as its haphazard methods of spraying the chemicals over cropland, and won his case. The court imposed a heavy fine on the offending agency, but Ryabukha would not be satisfied. He demanded that the agency be incorporated into the agro-industrial association as the only way to cut short its arbitrary practices.

While his suggestion was sinking in, he launched an attack on the local sugar factory, an industrial rather than agricultural enterprise, on the grounds that it was not operating properly and was polluting the environment. He also demanded that it be placed under the jurisdiction of his association. After that he began an offensive on the grain supply agency. You would not have recognized the man, so much did his character change.

I had been told so many stories about him before I came to Sidorenkovo that I was duly impressed and slightly afraid of meeting him. He seemed larger than life.

Taking a gamble

It turned out that there was little reason for my fears; the fifty-year-old chairman had been admitted to hospital for a heart complaint two days before I arrived. The Communist Party secretary at the farm Nikolai Nedelko was in communication with the chairman via a clandestine phone number, but it looked as if I would not see the man. I was upset, but there was little I could do.

Zavety Ilyicha is a medium-sized farm with slightly more than 5 thousand hectares of ploughland, orchards and 4 thousand head of cattle. There are 560 houses, where 13 hundred people live. Three hundred and thirty of them work on the farm.

"What about the rest of them?" A question to the Party secretary:

"About five hundred people draw pensions from the farm. They work as much as they want, but they are not on the members' list. Then there are children, housewives, and young workers."

I wanted to know more about the young workers, and Nikolai explained that the farm had struck a deal with a big factory in Kharkov to start production locally of some fairly unsophisticated parts for electrical appliances and consumer goods. The idea was to induce those who do not like farm work not to leave for the city. For instance, the husband is a tractor operator and the wife would like a "clean" urban job. In the case of such a family dilemma, the tractor operator, badly needed on the farm, may quit.

The small workshop has not solved the problem of labour migration, though. It employs ten "young workers," but plans have been made to expand production and employ more. The factory in the city supplies the farm with machine tools and semi-finished products, and regularly sends an expert over for production approval. Chairman Ryabukha is confident that this is sound business with good prospects, the more so as he is in favour of bringing rural living standards up to those in the cities.

This is how more and more villages now look. Is the old rural landscape to be regretted?

That he is committed to that policy is very much in evidence in the community. There are asphalt roads everywhere, two-storey brick houses with gas on tap, a modern community centre, a cafeteria and a shopping centre. All this leaves next to nothing of the traditional Ukrainian bucolic landscape, with its cosy white-washed huts amid cherry orchards. But who needs nostalgia? The people who live here should know better.

Lease contract is the explanation of the good performance of the farm and the entire farming sector of the region this year. They operate without any subsidies and are fully self-reliant in food. All farm machine operators work on lease contract. They have formed a special unit under Victor Zaitsev, a man with a college education. I asked him about the unit.

"There are 52 people in the unit, mostly operators of tractors and combine harvesters, and two accountants. Under the contract, we undertake to do all the field work from spring ploughing to the transportation of grain. The difference between the way we work and the customary, team contract is that we are also responsible for expenses. It is our job not only to grow a good harvest, but also to cut costs. We count every kopek we pay in wages and over heads. In the past, for instance, a mechanic would just throw away a broken tractor caterpillar, but now he prefers to fix it to cut overall costs. We have introduced checkbooks for dealings with the farm and every tractor operator gets 700 rubles a year from the farm for repairs and maintenance, and obviously he is interested in keeping maintenance costs low, and is trying to save money and return as much as he can to the accountants. This cuts production costs and increases wages."

"Do you pay him 700 rubles in cash?"

"No, he gets 700 rubles' worth of checks, and as the need arises to buy spares or fuel he just tears off a check and pays it to the accountants. After that he collects what he needs at the store, while the accountants keep a record of how much he has spent to keep his tractor running.

"Sounds a little bit like Monopoly money, doesn't it?"

Zaitsev smiles:

"It does in a way. Thus, we have 16 combine harvesters, a score of tractors, dump trucks and seeding machines plus thousands of hectares of land on our balance sheets, although we don't really own the lot. But we play the game by the rules and are to pay damages and we do pay in checks for depreciation. This is not very different from using monopoly money, or rather, from moving it from one pocket to another. After the lease contract expires, all the means of production return to the farm. That is not a harmless game if you think about it. After all, under the contract we 'kind of' sold the machines and land, that is they named the price, and we in turn 'kind of' assumed responsibility for them, because we have not acquired real rights to the means of production, or assumed any real obligations. That is how the lease contract goes."

"But surely today it is believed to be the prime mover of farming in this country..."

"The lease contract is a step forward, no mistake about that, but I am concerned that all that talk about yields, fertility, and productivity may induce us all to forget about being the real masters of the farm."

"Could you elaborate on that?"

"All right, our sunflower crop is below what we want it to be, the weather has not been quite good enough for it, and in general I would have thought we could do with less land sown to sunflower, given our local conditions. We could sell off some harvesters if we reduced our sunflower acreage, but I for one have no power to do that."

"But you can suggest the idea at a meeting of the board, can't you?"

"I can do that, certainly, but if you really have something you do as you please with it, rather than suggest or propose."

Problems

A day after I arrived Nikolai Ryabukha quarelled with his doctors and left the hospital. He felt it was not right that his farm should be shown to me while he was away. I suspect that he also wanted to talk to me or perhaps even ask for advice from a man who had come from Moscow. A great deal is under way on the farms and perhaps I knew how other people were doing.

He is short and plumpish. His voice is soft and anxious. He gave me a quick look of welcome and started talking as if he had been discussing the subject of our conversation for some time.

"I can get no sleep at night over all that leasing business. Do you know what I thought when we put our mechanics on lease? I thought: maybe we've made a mistake?"

"But from what I've seen, they're doing well. Productivity has grown and I'm told they take home 500 rubles each every month."

"But they earn half as much on the cattle farm. It's not that I want to see levelling stage a comeback. It is just that loose ends must be tied up here. It doesn't make sense that we have lease in the mechanized unit, while the cattle farm is still doing it the old way. The two are not isolated from each other, after all. They are like communicating vessels. There are many machines on the cattle farm, but that checkbook system does not cover cattle breeding and that's why our mechanics steer clear of the cattle farm."

"Why not put the cattle farm on a leasehold basis as well?"

"But what if nothing comes of it? We know full well what it may be like to get carried away by another campaign. We have to check it all first and try it out. We have a family here, the Shcherbaks. They volunteered to blaze the trail and took a hundred head of cattle on lease. They are good workers, but they have not outdone the farm, contrary to what theorists predict. There has been no breakthrough. The point is that at the farm we have all the facilities, like mechanized feed distribution, running water to every trough, you name it. We have spent years building all this, do we now have to break up the farm and give every lessee a feed-grinder of his own? Or take field work. You tell me that the mechanics are doing well, of course they are! Victor Zaitsev knows that he's talking about, he is an educated man. He counts his money carefully, but take a good look around you – there are quite a few ordinary mechanics in charge of teams working on lease, the idea being that enthusiasm alone can do the trick. If you ask me, this is no different from building failure into a sound undertaking again. Some people say, and I've read in the papers that the collective farm has discredited itself and that what we really need is a family farm, but I say to this that it is not the collective farm that has failed, it is we who have let it down. Collective farming has better prospects on the whole than private farming, because, economically speaking, large-scale production is better than small farms, but it is an entirely different story that this must be demonstrated by competition in good faith, rather than administrative preferences or stage-managed enthusiasm as often happened before."

"You have put all your mechanics on lease at one go. Is it not like those administrative preferences you are complaining about? As far as I know, on other farms such teams number about ten members and no more..."

"There was no bossing where we are concerned. It was just logic and persua-

sion. I believe that partial lease is a mistake if it covers field work. On the neighbouring farm they introduced six lease contracts and they have six teams of up to ten people, each working on plots carved out of the farm's land. Now they've got to give them enough machinery to last them from sowing to harvesting, I mean each of the six teams. It just doesn't make sense! You can't guarantee proper crop rotation this way, or let the land lie fallow. Now, you can do all that if you have thousands of hectares on your hands, but with tiny plots you can't afford to rotate your crops. This way we are piling more problems on top of what we have to grapple with as it is."

No more wholesale enthusiasm

At one time a phrase coined by one of the top leaders was current in this country: our goals are clear, our tasks have been defined, let us get down to work, comrades! It was a much-quoted phrase in speeches and newspaper articles, whatever the subject, farming, trade, or politics.

The stereotype of "stage-managed enthusiasm" mentioned by Nikolai Ryabukha, or for that matter any stereotype, is unacceptable in the age of sincerity brought about by perestroika and glasnost. It is quite logical, therefore, that even people working on a farm that is doing quite well are not all of one mind, that they argue and are not overconfident. A great deal is indeed under way on the farms in ths country, as one of the centres of gravity in the process of restructuring slowly but surely moves to farming as its basis. Bread is politics. A discerning observer will no doubt perceive the growing number of dimensions to that process as more and more problems arise, and not necessarily in interconnected areas. An analogy with contemporary education reform is justified, as it has shown that it can only succeed if the system of higher education is reformed as well.

Nikolai Ryabukha described his cattle farm and his cropping teams as communicating vessels, but that communication cannot be confined to one farm, because every farm is in communication with others and requires the right economic ambience. There is still a flow of administrtrative pressure from top to bottom, and conflict is in the making. Is that the reason why the reform of regional agro-industrial associations, something that Ryabukha simply had to undertake, has been so difficult?

The diverging attitudes towards the lease contract are an indication of progress, because they are an alternative to yesterday's readiness mindlessly to do as you are told.

The farmer's doubts must be understood and they call for careful analysis. A family farm appears to be more appropriate to the Baltic region, but does this mean that collective farms in the Ukraine cannot do better? One approach to grain production is called for in densely-populated Moldavia, but an entirely different one must be adopted in the northern non-black-earth regions with their depopulated villages. There the lease contract seems to be the answer.

A bumper harvest is yet to be delivered to the consumer.

Today's farmers do share the view, though, that what they need above all is independence and the right to deal with the land, costs, and rewards as they see fit.

Nikolai Ryabukha has his own point of view:

"They all want independence nowadays, you just hear them talk about it, but it all depends on how old the child is, as the saying goes. If you have not done well on your farm or in charge of your team, you've got no right to independence. You've got to demonstrate by your own performance that you can make the grade, and only after that can you make demands. There is a difference between independence and an unplanned economy. I, for one, am against that kind of independence."

"Do you favour centralized planning?"

"A guaranteed state order is in my interests, because I can build my work on it, but do not give me all those changes to the plan all the time. They compromize planning, although they have nothing to do with it, really."

"Many people are saying that farmers need market relations, rather than state planning..."

"I see no need for conflict here. The state is after all the protagonist on the market, because it depends upon the state whether the market is rich or poor. It is not the seller's market that matters now, by the way, although its importance is great, but the buyer's market. I want a market where I can buy cement, pipes, machines, timber, and even labour. For instance, a great deal of construction work is done here on this farm, but we have no builders of our own. I employ itinerant workers. They give me a good deal, because I don't have to set up an industrial base, but I have got to track those workers down like good old Sherlock Holmes! Where is the market where I can buy a building or cropping technology? You know, on a bad day I sometimes think that our attempts to get a new managerial formula in farming are no more than self-deception. We expect greater harvests of all these new contracts, temporary leases, and self-supporting teams, but meanwhile we buy grain abroad while our own grain, thirty per cent of it, rots in the fields. Our watermelons rot in the fields, we have not learnt basic discipline, but our sights are set on computers... My own estimate is that we lose up to 700 kg of grain per hectare, the higher the yield, the higher the losses. What kind of contract will put paid to that?"

As if ashamed of his own doubts he added:

"But we've got to make it, what we need is a well-earned ruble."

"How would you define that?"

"They get guaranteed pay here on this farm, just as they do everywhere else, an achievement we used to be so proud of. You know, the village has caught up with the city, that kind of logic. But did we really need the kind of pay schemes they use in the cities? We ended up having milkmaids, agronomists, and vets on salaries, a kind of salaried bureaucracy on the farms. We're now about to break that system up in order to link pay to performance. In the past an agronomist was paid for the standard of cultivation. After field work was over he would just take it easy and be paid for his past services, but what if his pay is also dependent on milk intake? He will then start thinking in the summer of providing fodder for the winter. We'll be introducing the new system as of next year."

A phone started ringing on his desk. He was reminded that the regional agro-industrial association was holding a meeting of collective farm chairmen an hour later. The meeting was to consider the setting up of a mutual assistance fund to help farms that lag behind, and a showdown was imminent. Nikolai Ryabukha apologized, shook my hand, summoned a car, and went back to his hard work.

Yuri Shevchenko

Reforms gathering momentum

The economic scene in Vientiane and other cities has livened up markedly of late. What factors have contributed to this process?

The life of Laotians seems to be open to all. Wooden or metal blinds replacing front walls in urban houses are raised from morning till night. In these houses Laotians cook meals, nurse their children and work, taking no notice of passersby. Small shops and workshops also give onto the street. In one of Vientiane's main streets we called at a workshop where furniture is woven from palm fibre. Its owner, Khamxay Sensombat, is assisted by his three sons. The furniture they make is selling well, but their incomes are growing slowly. The father and his sons are simply unable to take more orders.

Some of the workshop owners are forming cooperatives, but Khamxay Sensombat hesitates to admit others to his business.

"One can no longer work as I have all my life, doing everything oneself," he told us. "But how can I entrust the work of a lifetime to others? I have no faith in cooperatives. About five years ago all our peasants, even those who didn't want it, were enrolled in cooperatives. It turned out that everything belonged to all, and at the same time to no one. Harvests fell off... That's why we are gradually returning to family homesteads. To be sure, cooperatives differ. An old acquaintance of mine runs a Dansang cooperative near Vientiane. I must say the work is organized superbly there."

At the Dansang cooperative

Following the old furniture maker's advice, we visited the Dansang cooperative and met its chairman, Khamphiak Vongphinit.

A peasant by birth, he graduated from medical school in colonial times. During the internescine strife he maintained a neutral stand. Vongphinit lost his feet in a battle and had to abandon his medical practice. He decided to start a new life in his native village.

Dansang (Elephant Stone) is the third cooperative in the history of Vongphinit's native village. The first two, set up by an arbitrary decision of the local authorities, even on paper existed for less than two years. After these failures Vongphinit was allowed to organize a cooperative on a truly voluntary basis.

In the autumn of 1984, eleven villagers set up a trading or supply and sales cooperative on a share basis. Over the last four years it has developed into a diversified business.

"Our cooperative now consists of 120 families," Vongphinit said. "There is enough labour in general. What we need is skilled manpower for our sawmill, for a rice thrashing floor now under construction, and for our furniture workshop. The cooperative has been allowed to trade directly with Thailand. In exchange for our timber, we receive equipment and consumer goods. The fields, as well as cattle and poultry, have been leased out to families. The products are sold by the cooperative, which owns all the processing enterprises. Before starting a new business we discuss it at a general meeting, because people are expected to invest their money and labour in it. Dansang owes its successes not only to the collective labour but also to the collective mind and enterprise of its members. This enterprise is stimulated by the economic reforms now being carried out in our country."

To get an idea of the economic reforms and the principles that underlie them, we met with Khamxay Souphanouvong, First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Planning, Economy and Finance.

From barter trade to money-commodity relations

"Like the Soviet Union, Laos is now undergoing a radical change, a stormy and extremely promising period," he told us. "The main economic task for our backward peasant country is to go over from a predominantly natural to a commodity economy, commodity-money relations. This is a distinctive feature of the initial stage in the period of our country's transition to socialism. It must be said outright that we failed to achieve our main economic objectives by the old methods of strict centralization, by administrative methods and by keeping the national economy isolated from the rest of the world.

"The character of production relations should correspond with the level of productive forces, and this level is very low in our country. No one can escape this universal objective law, 'deceive' it, so to say. We haven't been able to escape it either.

There is enough bread on sale at Vientiane's central market

The agricultural cooperatives formed up and down the country, often under pressure from above, proved weak. Output did not grow appreciably, and the living standards of members did not improve.

"That is why the Fourth Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, held two years ago, set a course for radical reform in the economic and social fields," Souphanouvong went on. "We concluded that it was necessary to lift many of the restrictions and bans and exercise management by economic, not administrative, levers – through sale and purchase, market, price formation and credit. Prices are set by the market on the basis of demand and supply, and it is for these prices that the state purchases agricultural produce, particularly rice, from the peasants. The taxes paid by the producers have been reduced, and the barriers in the way of goods traffic between provinces have been removed.

"The provinces have been allowed to conduct export and import operations independently. The land in villages and in cooperatives is now leased out to families. As a result, the prices of almost all goods are now lower than they were on the free market.

"The position of state-owned industrial plants is changing too," Khamxay Souphanouvong went on. "They are switching over to operation on a paying basis, on self-financing principles, to the autonomous conduct of their affairs, including the search for sources of raw materials and markets, foreign markets as well. Most plants are now doing well, and this is good both for their workers and the country as a whole. The unprofitable plants are to be made cooperative or mixed enterprises, or are even to be put out to private tender.

"There are no longer different – official and unofficial – exchange rates for the kip, our national currency. We have abandoned the overstated official rate in relation to the dollar, whereas the extremely low rate on the black market has risen. The very notion of black market is practically disappearing. The kip has become stronger. Whether in banks or on the free market, one dollar is now exchanged for 350-380 kips. As a matter of fact, the kip has become a convertible currency. Kips or dollars, even Thai bahts are accepted in shops.

"We hope that the law on foreign investments will help attract capital and modern technology from other countries.

"Soviet perestroika," Khamxay Souphanouvong said in conclusion, "has tremendously influenced our new approaches and our new thinking. We are taking the experience of fraternal socialist countries into account and seeking to learn from it, both positive and negative."

A street scene in Vientiane

Nine out of every ten Laotians live in the countryside

Photos by Alexander Galkin and K. Kongvongsa

Self-supported operation

Since the beginning of this year, half the state-owned enterprises of Laos and all the enterprises in Vientiane and Vientiane Province, have switched over completely to operation on a self-supporting basis. The furniture factory No. 1 was one of the first to practise socialist enterprise.

After the revolution its Japanese owner left Laos, taking with him the equipment and the list of addresses of foreign partners. The cabinet makers had to begin a new life in semi-empty shops manufacturing window frames, door jambs and ordinary tables and stools. They were made of mahogany, because there was no other raw material at the factory. Almost all the products were bought by the state for offices, schools and clubs. Valuable timber was used for the manufacture of these articles.

After a decision had been taken to make the factory a self-supporting enterprise, the personnel unanimously voted to resume the output of high-quality furniture. A few samples were immediately bought by foreign missions. The factory, in the red a year ago, began to make a comfortable profit. But in the past few months the profit has stopped growing because the Vientiane market has become glutted. The way out lies in finding markets abroad.

"Unfortunately, the old ties with foreign partners have been lost," the factory's deputy manager Khamphay Lothanabounmi told us. "We need good publicity and direct ties with foreign customers."

Laotians are used to seeing the "Made in Thailand" label on most consumer goods. Does this mean they are still unable to produce these goods themselves? Few people know that on Californian beaches fashionable women who have a wide choice of articles to buy wear shorts made in far-off Vientiane. The clothing factory, located in a new building on the outskirts of Vientiane, is now filling a large order: nearly 100,000 men's check shirts for a Canadian company. West German and Dutch trading companies have also placed orders with the factory.

"We established our first contacts with foreign partners over a year ago," said Sian Thongmiksay, director-general of the clothing factory. "About 30,000 suits of children's clothes were produced for Hungary. The customers told us that the quality of our work measured up to world standards. This inspired us with confidence, and we began to offer our services on foreign markets. All the profit went on expanding the operating floor and purchashing sewing machines in Japan.

"Of course we do not yet have the money to buy everything we need. That is why we have obtained a loan from the State Bank of Laos. Besides, we are negotiating with international banks..."

Showing us round his expanding factory, Sian Thongmiksay obviously took pride in the scale of the work. He outlined dazzling prospects of forming a mixed company for the manufacture of clothing. The law on foreign investments permits not only to get credits abroad but to invite in foreign investors with their modern technology.

In general, the reforms being carried out in Laos have noticeably enlivened its economy.

Open doors

The law on foreign investments was adopted in July of this year. Several companies began to operate in Laos even before the law on foreign investments was officially adopted. The Laotian leadership decided to test various provisions of the law in practice while it was still a bill. Such method of working out legislative proposals has become a norm recently. Thanks to this test, an amendment was made to the bill. Enterprises fully owned by foreign businessmen have been allowed to operate for 15 years. After that the owner or owners will have to conclude a new treaty with the state for a subsequent period, and perhaps on new terms.

This restriction does not apply to mixed Laotian-foreign companies, and this probably explains why most companies are now formed with joint foreign private and Laotian state capital. It is possible for joint enterprises to be set up by businessmen from Laos and another country. There are also more complex forms of cooperation when an enterprise is jointly owned by foreign businessmen, Laotian state-owned organizations and private citizens. All such forms are permitted by law. Said one foreign businessman: "The law allows everything except trade in arms, narcotics and antiques."

The New Laotian-Thai World is one of the first trading companies to have been established in Vientiane. It has repaired the main building in the central market, turning it from a dusty corn chandler's shop into a supermarket. The huge new shop is supplied with goods from Thailand. The company came into being immediately after a violent border conflict between the two countries, and in less than a year of existence it has proved that cooperation is much more advantageous to both sides than confrontation. The New Laotian-Thai World is doing so well that it has been decided to continue rebuilding the market so that by 1990 it will accommodate up to one thousand traders at a time.

Before the law on foreign investments was adopted, foreign businessmen took a cautious stand, fearing that the conditions might prove unsuitable. Today, the recently established Committee for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations is barely able to consider all the incoming applications in good time. Most applications come from Thailand, Khamxay Souphanouvong told us. But there are also applications from France, Sweden, Japan and even from the United States and Australia...

However, foreign and local businessmen are investing funds mainly in trade and tourism and related services. They are in no hurry to expand industry in which the republic is interested most of all. And then they need Laos first of all as a market for their goods, and not as a competitive manufacturer of its own goods. But it is still too early to draw conclusions. The time will probably come when foreign and local businessmen will start building factories, livestock farms and mines.

Everyone answerable to law

A major readjustment of the economic mechanism inevitably leads to radical changes in the political sphere. It is expected that a constitution, the first in the history of Laos, will at last be adopted instead of the government decrees that have regulated the country's life since the proclamation of a people's democratic republic on December 2, 1975.

Several candidates were nominated for one seat in the local elections held in mid-November. Glasnost is extending to ever newer spheres of public life. For instance, who could have believed only a couple of years ago that the country's top officials would be brought to trial? The case made such a stir that it should be described in greater detail.

Rumours that a heroin factory had been uncovered in the north of the country, in the Laotian part of the notorious "golden triangle," spread through Vientiane long before the trial began. It was also rumoured that attempts would be made to hush up the affair because top officials were involved in it. Thai radio and television accused the Laotian government of the illegal production and clandestine sale of narcotics abroad.

The trial opened in the Ministry of Justice club in August. Bags of opium and packets of heroin lay on the floor. Some powder even spilled out.

The main sensation of the trial was that among the persons involved in the case was Sompheng Keobounhouan, former member of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, former first secretary of the party committee and former chairman of the administrative council of the Oudomxay Province.

Oudomxay Province lies in mountains that are barely accessible because of the jungle which provides good hiding places. It is sparsely populated, and local people have for a long time been sowing poppy. The drug traffickers from neighbouring Thailand and Burma thought the area provided favourable opportunities for their business. For a bribe of 20,000 dollars, Keobounhouan permitted them to organize two underground laboratories. In addition to members of the narcomafia, the laboratories were guarded, on his instructions, by about 100 soldiers of the People's Army – as a "top-secret project."

It is difficult to say for how long the two well-equipped laboratories would have existed had it not been for a road accident. One of the cars carrying the "white death" broke down in May and local peasants picked up some of the packets that dropped out of it. The news of the accident reached the security bodies. Out of roughly fifty people engaged in illegal operations only two avoided arrest because they could not be found. Sompheng Keobounhouan was in Vientiane at the time. He had been invited to the capital allegedly for appointment to a new post.

Ordinary "carriers" and a highly-placed degenerate were placed in the same dock. Keobounhouan was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. The ringleaders, who were tried in absentia, were sentenced to ten years', and the rest to from two to eight years' imprisonment. Laotian citizens made up less than a third of the criminal group. The foreign citizens – Thais, Burmese and a Chinese – are to be turned over to the judicial authorities of their countries in keeping with the 1961 international narcotics convention.

After the sentences had been read out, more than half a ton of opium and heroin were publicly burned in front of the Ministry of Justice.

"It gave me quite a shock to learn that a top and, one would think, authoritative leader was involved in such a terrible crime," Bounthan Chanthavong, Chairman of the Supreme Court, said. "This means that among us there are still people without a firm moral position, people who can be bribed.

"The trial gives the lie to inventions that the manufacture of narcotics has been sanctioned by authorities. We are setting up special teams to fight narcobusiness. It is important to persuade the mountain dwellers to give up their harmful practice and replace poppy growing by the cultivation of other, useful crops. This will, of course, require considerable time and effort..."

Indeed, the reforms being carried out in all spheres of life require considerable effort and time on the part of the people of this small Southeast Asian country.

Alexander Galkin and Alexander Usvatov
VIENTIANE-MOSCOW

To mutual advantage

Hundreds of jointly built industrial projects and a trade turnover running to eight billion rubles annually – these figures afford an idea of the scale of Cuban-Soviet economic cooperation

A guard with the words "nuclear safety force" on the sleeve of his tunic admitted us to the construction site of the Juragua atomic electric power plant. Equally vigilant guards carefully examined our papers at the entrances to every section of the site, although we were conducted by no less a personage than the deputy director in charge of safety, Julio Paz, well-known to everyone here.

Special project

Among the numerous Soviet-Cuban construction projects, Juragua is in a class by itself. Both because it is opening new technological vistas in cooperation between our two countries and because of the heightened interest it has evoked in the Western Hemisphere. Elements hostile to the Cuban revolution actually got together at a conference in Puerto Rico to voice their alarm over the construction of the Juragua power station, and a group of American legislators made similar representations to the Cuban leadership.

To allay such apprehensions the Cuban side proposed exchanging delegations of scientists, with a Cuban group visiting the atomic power station in Florida and a U.S. group visiting the Juragua site. But there has been no response. Meanwhile the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Hans Blix, has been here, and after his visit many doubts have been dispelled. Nevertheless Julio Paz does not think that the question of ensuring safety, especially in the light of the Chernobyl tragedy, is superfluous.

"We have an entirely different type of reactor," he told us. "It is a water-moderated reactor which has been tried and tested in the U.S.S.R. and other countries, in particular Finland. Moreover, as distinct from the Chernobyl reactor, it is installed in a hermetically sealed building enclosed in a casing of 8-mm steel plating inside and a two-metre thick concrete wall outside. The building can withstand an 8-force earthquake and floods with 30-metre high waves (though no such things occur here), tornadoes and even the impact of a 20-ton aircraft at a speed of 700 km an hour. The last of these is a West German norm, nobody else, including the Americans, observes it. In a word, all world safety standards have been taken into account."

"But don't you have to provide for unforeseeable contingencies as well?"

"It was for this reason it was decided that only the operating personnel will reside in the 'nuclear town' itself," Paz replied. "And there will be a safety zone with a radius of 2.5 km in which there will be no buildings whatever. As a matter of fact, this is a rather deserted location for Cuba. Since 1984 there has been a radiological laboratory here which monitors the natural radiation background within a radius of 30 km. So we are prepared to cope with unforeseen circumstances as well."

Basic to safety is the quality of the construction work. At Juragua this principle is expresed in posters reading: "People will forget the work you have done quickly, but they will never forget the work you have done badly." As many as 12,000 people are employed on this construction site. Cuba has concentrated its best building workers here. Many of them have had special training in the U.S.S.R. And every worker taken on here, regardless of his skill rating, has to go through a training course and pass an examination. Two laboratories verify the performance of every operation twice, and a quality certificate is issued for every job.

In a word, Juragua is a special project and is given special attention. Therefore there are less defects here than elsewhere. Nevertheless there are some. Equipment supplied by the Soviet Union also undergoes dual control and, it turns out, with good reason. Shipments even to a construction site as important as this are sometimes found to contain defective items. At "run-of-the-mill" joint construction undertakings instances of this kind are more frequent.

Reconditioned tractor

The scars left by the welders are barely visible on the brand-new T-130 in the spacious, well-lighted workshop of the factory in Cienfuegos for the repair of Soviet construction and road-building machines. The factory was built five years ago to service the considerable amount of Soviet machinery operating in Cuba, in particular T-100 tractors. That model is already obsolete, some of the tractors have been operating under the tropical Cuban sun for nearly 20 years, but the Cubans prefer to recondition them rather than to write them off. The T-130 has made a poorer showing. Loaders based on this model supplied by the Soviet Union have landed in the Cienfuegos repair shops even before they went into operation: the drivers refused to work on them, complaining that the machines were unstable owing to faulty design of scoops and tracks, and stuffy. Repairmen are to make the necessary modifications.

I shall not go into the details of the design of the loader. Experts, of course, may disagree as to its merits, but when it comes to trade, the customer is always right. I shall merely say that some of the Cuban executives I met at this factory did not know that the T-130 are produced in Chelyabinsk, nor did they know where the scoop mechanism is mounted on them. Incidentally the Soviet specialists working in Cienfuegos were also not quite clear on the latter point. I mention this not in order to find fault with anyone but merely to stress that even a plant built with Soviet assistance to service Soviet machinery does not have business contacts either with the Soviet producers of the machinery or with the allied repair services in the U.S.S.R. This applies not only to the Cienfuegos works. Of the many Soviet-Cuban cooperation projects only only eleven, according to official data, have direct contact with their Soviet counterparts. On closer examination one finds that the ties that do exist are confined mainly to consultation and visits by experts. Commercial professionals sarcastically dub these contacts "scientific and technological tourism." Of course an introductory stage is inevitable in any new undertaking, but little can be accomplished if everything begins and ends at that stage.

The human factor

Soviet-Cuban cooperation is indeed teamwork in the full sense of the term. We, as a rule, contribute the ideas, the

blueprints, the equipment and the consultants. The Cubans supply the building materials, the manpower and the tools. A great deal, including efficiency, depends on mutual understanding on the factory floor and at the building site. To heighten efficiency, international, mixed Soviet-Cuban teams have latterly been widely introduced. Some of them work smoothly, in others there is friction. One specialist aphoristically put it thus: "The Cubans are proud people, ours are straightforward."

However, it is evidently not only the peculiarities of the national or a person's character that lay their imprint on the atmosphere in the above-mentioned teams. There is also the language barrier, people do not understand one another not because they do not want to or because their characters clash, but simply because they cannot. Although hundreds of Soviet engineers and skilled workers have been in Cuba for many years, they still communicate, as they did in the beginning, mainly through interpreters. And there are not enough interpreters. For instance, to the 320 Soviet specialists participating in the construction of an oil refinery, also in Cienfuegos, there are only seven interpreters.

What is the solution? Recall how long it takes to comply with all the formalities connected with sending someone to work abroad, from how many angles the officials and organizations involved weigh the suitability of the candidate. Would it not be better if some of the time and energy thus spent were to be used to teach the specialist concerned the rudiments of the language of the country he is assigned to, to supply him with the relevant textbooks and phrase-books?

And another thing. The fluctuation of the workforce is also our common problem. Our Cuban comrades complain that workers who have undergone a course of training either at a factory or a construction site frequently leave to take up jobs in less industrialized locations where they are provided with better housing, for instance. The Soviet side also suffers: a specialist who has barely found his bearings in the new environment, learned to speak a little Spanish and become more or less acclimatized, often has to yield place to a newcomer, because his tour of duty has ended and to prolong it is too complicated a matter. And when the question of prolongation of stay comes up, common sense does not always prevail over formal considerations.

The work and the hitches

It must be admitted that Cuba does occasionally get from the U.S.S.R. blueprints with errors, subassembles with defects and specialists with shortcomings. At the construction site of the oil refinery, for example, the pipes did not fit properly because the design in allowing for expansion from heat, did not reckon with the powerful effect of exposure to the direct rays of the tropical sun. At the same plant several welders did not measure up to requirements and had to be transferred to other work. It is more difficult to judge of the competence of an engineer. Many of those I have spoken with on this score believe that it would be a good thing if specialists were required to pass an examination outside their own particular department and to go through a trial period.

These and similar ideas are aired by Soviet personnel during various business contacts and meetings. Some sound ideas are put forward. It is proposed, for instance, to do away with standardization of remuneration for work irrespective of the skill of a specialist and the labour he contributes. There is some dissatisfaction as regards the attention paid to the needs of the personnel. In this respect the living and working conditions of the Soviet workers and engineers in Cuba are not always up to the mark. This applies both to the problems arising from the tropical climate and poor living conditions, and to the fact that the administrators here too often believe that the higher pay and diverse privileges more than compensate for these inconveniences. Thus, inconveniences acquire an all but legitimate status.

Is it in place to raise this delicate question in Cuba? After all, the Cuban comrades are doing everything they can to make the Soviet specialists comfortable, often providing them with amenities they themselves lack. An agreement signed at governmental level regulating the terms on which Soviet specialists are assigned for work in Cuba, has been in force for nearly 20 years now. It has been revised and updated twice, the last time quite recently. It sets forth in detail the obligations of both sides as regards pay, travel arrangements, living quarters, working conditions and recreation facilities.

Cuban welder Juan Benavides and Ivan Beskrovny (right), an engineer from Moscow, are just two of the 12,000 working on the Juragua project *TASS photo*

Nevertheless, a foreign country is not home. In spite of the friendly atmosphere, the tropical heat is oppressive. Besides, the provisions of the above-mentioned agreement are not always strictly observed. No agreement can foresee everything. There is no need to cite all the complaints, many of them perhaps insignificant in themselves, I have heard in different places here. It is not a matter of demands for special privileges and comforts, but for maximum approximation to accustomed standards. Moreover, much could be improved without any great expenditure of effort. For instance, provision for the satisfaction of the social and cultural requirements of the Soviet specialists working in Cuba could be made in long-term agreements.

Whether proposals of this kind are practicable or not, they are certainly worth considering. After all, the efficiency of the human factor depends in no small measure on concern for human needs.

* * *

Soviet-Cuban cooperation is indeed mutually advantageous. Cuba, which is building an up-to-date industry, needs it. The U.S.S.R. also needs it. The millions of tons of sugar, the thousands of tons of citrus fruits, the nickel-cobalt concentrates, the coffee, the marble and the tobacco we get from Cuba would otherwise have to be paid for in hard currency.

At the present time the two countries are searching jointly for ways and means of heightening the effectivenss of the cooperation, and new ideas are being advanced. Experts hold that it would be wisest to concentrate on completing projects already started and retooling operating capacities. Both sides have some experience in cooperating with both socialist and capitalist countries, but in Soviet-Cuban cooperation the interests of both countries have so far been best served by construction on a compensation basis. Now the idea of joint ventures, in particular of a building organization, has been entered on the agenda. Several weeks ago a boatload of timber arrived in Havana from the Soviet Far East where teams of Cuban lumbermen have been working since last year and where the Cubales lumbering complex, the fruit of our joint efforts, is operating. In a word, things are moving.

Vitaly Sobolev,
our own correspondent

HAVANA

From confrontation to understanding

Millions watch as Miodowicz and Walesa debate on TV

Many Poles, not without reason, believed that such a TV debate would never take place. However, millions had a chance to watch a televised meeting between Alfred Miodowicz, Chairman of the All-Poland Trade Unions Alliance, and Lech Walesa, the former Solidarity leader. In fact there were numerous difficulties in organizing the meeting but in my opinion these difficulties are scarcely worth mentioning today now that the meeting has indeed taken place and attracted enormous publicity in Poland and abroad. Despite all the difficulties the debate was held and both participants agreed that it should not be the last time.

The 45-minute debate between Miodowicz and Walesa evoked different responses, in different viewers. One can't help but agree that the debate, however differently people might regard its substance, has become a symbol of the changes under way in Poland, and in particular, the changes concerning freedom to hold different views, and world outlooks. The debate has in fact become an example of a Polish version of glasnost. In other words, those supporters of Lech Walesa who strongly advised him against coming to the Warsaw TV centre without a team of sympathetic advisers, so as to avoid possible manipulation on the part of the government-controlled TV, should be ashamed of themselves.

The debate, suggested by Alfred Miodowicz, is a new feature of the Polish political scene. It demonstrated the continued progress in political as well as economic pluralism. The Miodowicz-Walesa dialogue was convincing in its authenticity. It was broadcast live and uncensored, and even more importantly, no one intruded to comment on the participants' words.

The public did not hesitate to respond. On December 3, Trybuna Ludu published comments by people from different walks of life testifying to the fact that the debate had been understood as the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in the nation's life, an indication of both sides' preparedness to seek mutually acceptable solutions.

Kazimierz Lojewski, chairman of the Bar of Poland, thinks that a new administrative approach has won through tactics that presumes openness for all political and philosophic tendencies that are opposed to the official line but do not violate the existing constitutional provisions. We have reached the basic prerequisite for the very existence of the state and society, the prerequisite that allows us to win that confidence of the people that is so indispensable for the govenrment.

Professor Witold Benedyktowicz, member of the consultative council attached to the President of the Council of State of Poland and a Methodist priest, thinks that the Miodowicz-Walesa debate has revealed a range of problems that demand solutions in the years to come and has started a dialogue that will help overcome those difficulties.

Political analyst Adam Bromke, Professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences' institue for political studies, believes that the live broadcast of the debate between the two opponents enhanced the prestige of the country.

Let us now recall the key points of the dialogue.

Naturally, both Miodowicz and Walesa spoke at length of pluralism in the trade union movement. Miodowicz repeatedly stressed that those who wish to foist a pluralistic system on the trade unions can hardly be friends of the movement. The existence of two trade unions at one factory will eventually result in a split in the work collective, and various rifts among workers, which will do no good to either side. Pluralism, said Miodowicz, can also exist in unity. He repeated his earlier proposal to supporters of the Solidarity to join the official trade unions, after which new elections will be held. In his turn, Walesa, referring to the harmful effects of monopolization in the political, social and economic spheres, maintained that the end of the trade union monopoly remained the basic precondition or a compromise.

Alfred Miodowicz drew attention to another aspect of the problem: the kind of pluralism Walesa proposed might jeopardize the social security necessary for the normal life of society.

Lech Walesa emphasized that conditions in the country were becoming increasingly favourable for vast reforms. One of the factors instrumental in this process is the policy of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union. However, Walesa claimed that in the Soviet Union the process was going faster than in Poland.

The Miodowicz-Walesa TV debate did not produce any decisions. That was not its aim. But the debate demonstrated that the only way to solve the complex problems of present-day Poland was to discuss them openly.

Miodowicz and Walesa spoke of Poland's most pressing issues. They displayed genuine concern for the future of the country, and its economic and political standing in Europe. They have different views on how this future could be attained, and the ways and means of solving the nation's burning problems and realizing its potential. At the same time, some of their ideas were indicative of a rapprochement of positions, rather than confrontation. This is expected to facilitate the long-waited round-table discussion attended by representatives of various social tendencies and groups.

In conclusion, we would like to cite some statistics. As was shown by a poll carried out by the public opinion centre, 97 per cent of the 300 Poles over 15 who took part in the poll favoured the Miodowicz-Walesa meeting. The discussion evoked optimism about the possibility of mutual understanding between the government and the opposition; 18 per cent of respondents believe the debate was a turning point, 61 per cent that it was a sign of progress towards new hopes for a compromise, 17 per cent said the discussion illustrated the impossibility of mutual understanding. And only a mere 4 per cent refused to voice an opinion.

Ewa Golanska,
Ryszard Najderski
WARSAW

Magna Carta

Jan Martenson, U.N. Under-Secretary-General, Head of the U.N. Centre for Human Rights, visited the U.S.S.R. on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The following is an interview Mr Martenson granted to our correspondent Irina Lagunina.

Mr Martenson, December 10 is the Human Rights Day. The year 1988 marking the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration makes this a special occasion. Forty years is a long time. To what an extent have the principles and norms contained in the declaration been realized over these decades? What effect has the declaration had on the destiny of the international community?

That declaration is a very important document, a kind of Magna Carta of our times, and it was a very farsighted, very daring and very bold document which was felt at the time to be almost utopian and very idealistic, and few people believed perhaps that it would achieve its goals. And today, 40 years afterwards, the world is, of course, witnessing the gross violation of human rights in many places, unfortunately, but you have to admit that we live in a much better world in spite of these constant violations and thanks to the Declaration on Human Rights, because very much of what was foreseen there has been achieved. For instance, we have now a situation by which the universal declaration has branched off and led to some 60 international instruments. We have the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, we have the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, etc. That means that we have a mechanism of implementation and a mechanism of control, and that member countries of the United Nations are reporting to the United Nations about how they are fulfilling their obligations in their countries.

Then they go back home, report the results, and in many instances they change the law, they change practices. Than, in certain instances individuals in member countries could come before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights or the U.N. Committee on the elimination of racial discrimination and say that basic human rights and fundamental freedoms have been violated by my country. And then the matter is looked into by the U.N.

There is also a system of special reporters that the U.N. under certain circumstances can send to member countries and territories.

Let us now switch over from the political aspect of the Universal Declaration to the practical moves made on its basis. Is there much the U.N. and its specialized institutions and centres can do?

When we speak about the Universal Declaration, and the role of the U.N. in the world, we must of course remember that the U.N. comprises sovereign countries, which decide matters on their own territories. What we need is the political will of the member countries to implement all these rules. So the role of U.N. is rather limited by that factor.

For example, thousands of families inquired about their members who had mysteriously disappeared but it was only on rare occasions our efforts to help them bore fruit.

Of course, there are a lot of violations of human rights. I mean, there is summary execution, there is torture, there is apartheid, and many, many other things that we must try to correct in the world. And we have the mechanism for it; now I think it is for the political will of the international community to make every effort, to try to stop these annoying practices.

What, in your opinion, brooks no delay?

I could list a very long catalogue, I don't know what is worst. There are of course the crimes against life; the right to live is one of the basic human rights.

But there is one problem: I think we must try to achieve universal adherence to the various legal instruments, conventions and treaties in the field of human rights. There is only one international treaty that is rather close to its fulfilment: it is the convention on the right of the child, which hopefully will come into force next year.

So we have the political basis – the declaration. There is also the mechanism for supervising the observance of international human rights legislation. But it seems to me that this legislation would be more effective still if every citizen knew what rights he has and how he can protect himself and his freedoms. Unfortunately, many are still in the dark about that, both in the Soviet Union and in many other countries across the world. What is your centre doing in this respect?

We are attacking this problem, I've been involved in human rights for over a year and I have established certain priorities and made certain reorganizations. There is the triangular relationship between legislation, implementation, and information and education. The latter is very important for it is not enough to have legislation and implementation. People must also be aware of their human rights. That's why we are giving the priority to information and education. And we are trying to print a handbook of human rights to include human rights in the curriculum for elementary schools. There are other things to do in future.

While in the Soviet Union, you have certainly looked into the problem of human rights observance in the U.S.S.R. Your conclusions?

I understand that there are a lot of changes going on in your country. What I see now in this country is a very interesting development towards the full realization of the law. And that tendency is very encouraging.

I'd like to say in this connection that a U.N. academic course in the administration of justice and the exercise of human rights was conducted in Moscow on November 21-25, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Declaration, with nearly 200 persons attending. The course was arranged by the U.N. Human Rights Centre as part of the consultative service and technical aid programme. Ten Eastern European countries were represented in its proceedings.

We had a five-day discussion of the entire range of problems pertaining to human rights – from the noble principles of the Universal Declaration all the way to technical matters. The meeting was quite useful in several respects; what matters most, they gave us ample chance to exchange information, experience, and knowledge.

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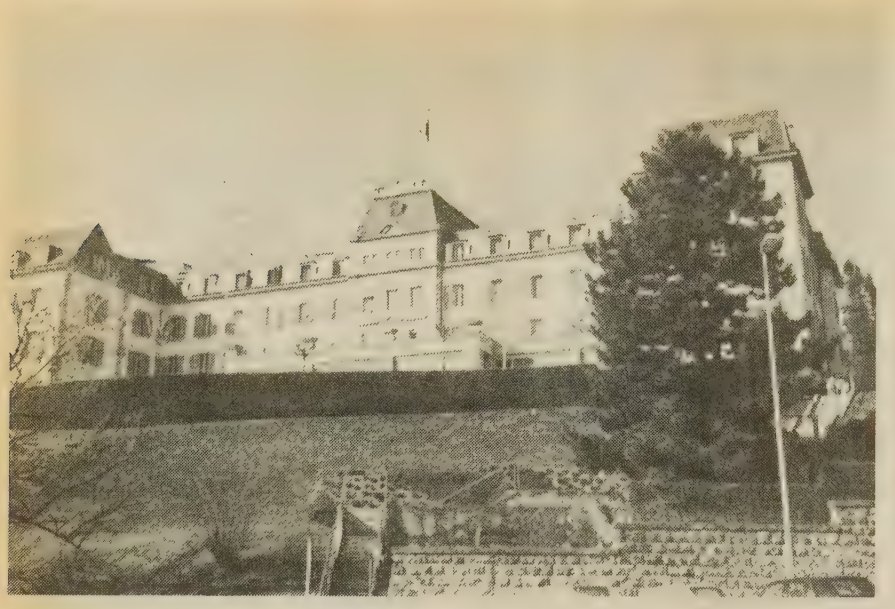


A quiet retreat

– this is what the building, flying a white flag, in the centre of Geneva, where the International Committee of the Red Cross is located looks like. Do not be deluded by appearances. Work at the ICRC's can in no way be compared to that of a comfortable desk job

In 1982 the armed groups of the Afghan opposition signed a unique accord whereby several Soviet prisoners of war captured by them were handed over for two-years' internment to a neutral state, in this case Switzerland. The two years passed comparatively quickly and the internees returned home to the Soviet Union. These were the first Soviet POWs to return home. Few knew of the services rendered to the Soviet soldiers, their families and the country as a whole, but this made the services no less valuable.

Now the Afghan armed opposition, judging by the statements of its leaders, is ready to enter into direct talks with the Soviet authorities in regard to the fate of the POWs, but in 1982 such a prospect still looked unlikely. The return of the soldiers came about thanks to the esteem of a unique public organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross. Any regime, including those which flout international law and show disregard for humanitarian principles, seeks to have good relations with this organization.

The recollections of Solferino

If Jean Henri Dunant, the kind-hearted Swiss with an ability for compassion and the unique gift to live up to his word, was alive today he would probably be utterly dismayed at the dimensions of man's trials and tribulations; he would hardly dare to assume that there exists a service or an organization capable of helping those who have fallen victims to intermittent wars, cruel dictatorships and vast natural calamities. Jean Henri Dunant, however, died before the outbreak of the First World War. In 1859, when still a young man, he was an eyewitness at the Battle of Solferino between the Austrians and the allied army of France and the Kingdom of Sardinia. The fighting resulted in more than 40 thousand killed and wounded, many of whom died because there was little medical aid. His personal involvement in attempting to save those who could be saved was followed, on his return to Geneva, by the publication of his book titled "A Memory of Solferino" which immediately became a best seller. His idea was simple: there was a need for all countries to set up voluntary relief societies to save the wounded. In 1863 at a conference in Geneva the foundation was laid for the Red Cross movement.

What started 125 years ago as an attempt by a handful of enthusiasts to give a helping hand to the wounded has now expanded into a system of national and international organizations setting before themselves a whole range of challenging tasks. This movement bases its activities on a whole number of special international laws: the four Geneva conventions of 1949 and the two 1977 protocols to them, all in all 600 articles. They are an attempt to bring kindness and humaneness into our cruel world.

The conventions oblige the signatory countries to take care of the wounded and sick servicemen on land or sea, to ensure the humane treatment of prisoners of war and to protect the population in wartime. More than 160 countries have signed the convention to date.

The protocols complement the conventions. One of them provides for the extention of the Geneva documents to cover the national liberation movements fighting against colonialism. The second protocol gives these documents an even broader interpretation. It calls for those who are captured while waging regular armed struggle against government forces, and who have taken over a part of the country's territory to be treated as POWs. (This provision does not apply to uprisings and individual acts of violence.) The first protocol has been signed by 72 nations, the second by 65.

Warriors without arms

The unwillingness of many governments to be a party to the 1977 protocols is easily explained. It puts army generals and secret police chiefs in a difficult position.

The protocols forbid the bombing of civilian installations, the blockading of populated areas, the eradication of food reserves, water sources and land for agriculture, destruction of dams and dykes and deliberate damage to the environment. The documents also provide for the restricted use of war facilities, banning weapons and methods of combat that can lead to excessive suffering. National liberation fighters captured in civilian clothes but armed should also be regarded as prisoners of war. Though this

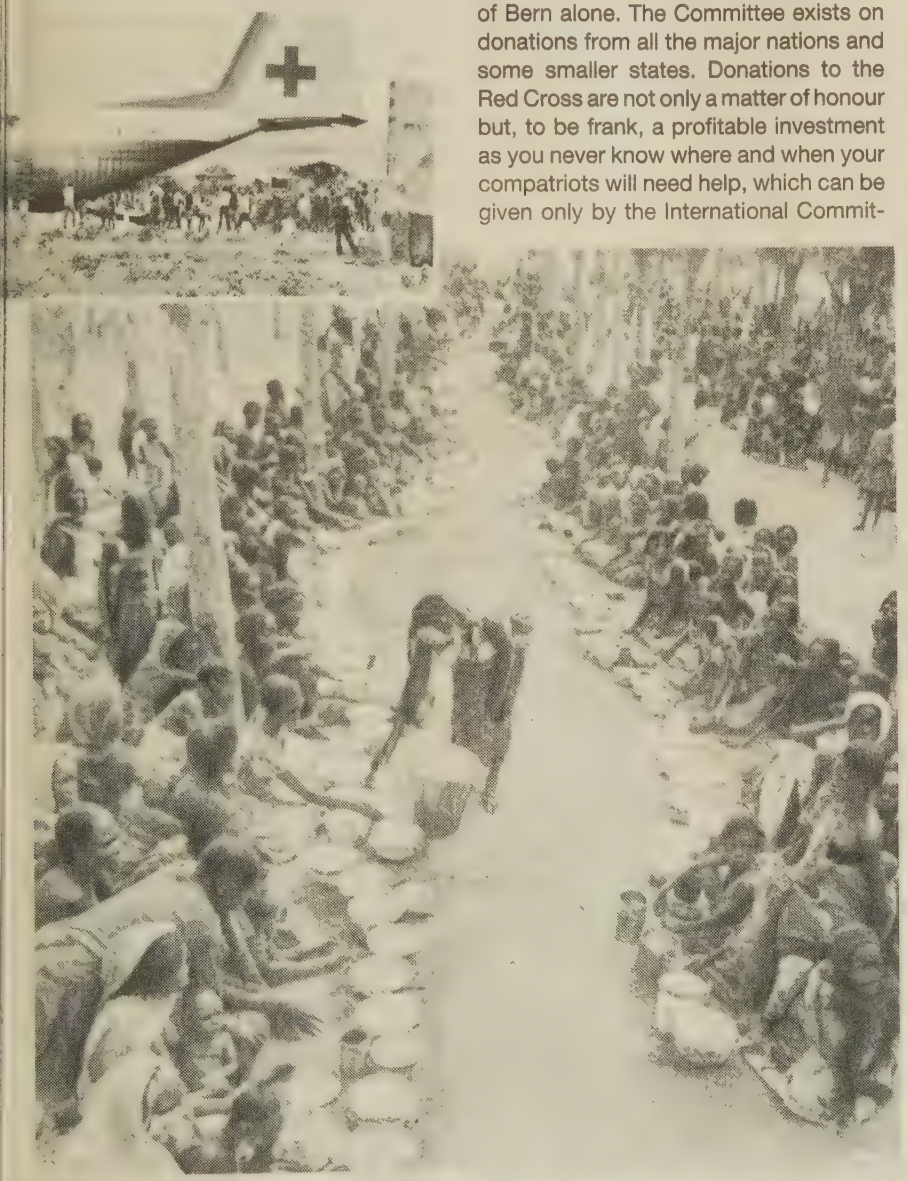
provision does not apply to mercenaries, they too must be treated humanely.

Though these principles seem easy to proclaim, they are difficult to observe, and practically impossible to monitor. Therefore, the simplest policy would be to sign and see how things work out. Naive as it might look, the Red Cross movement has won great moral prestige, and there is no force on the international scene which would like to come to blows with it. Even nazi Germany went through the motions of observing the Geneva conventions. (They did not apply this provision to Soviet prisoners of war on the pretext that Moscow was not a signatory to the conventions.) In 1935 Red Cross representatives were allowed to visit three concentration camps, including Dachau, and in 1940 to visit Buchenwald, not the death camp, but only the labour camp in which Dutch prisoners were kept. Here, as the Guardian newspaper writes, they found "an exemplary camp from the point of view of architecture and hygienic standards." Berlin permitted members of the International Committee to visit Western prisoners. During the war the Committee helped to exchange no less than 23 million messages both ways and supplied 446,000 tons of food for POWs. Towards the end of the war more than 100,000 POWs were receiving food parcels.

In Berlin they tried to be polite to the representatives of the Red Cross since the International Committee also took care of German prisoners of war. It was only after the war that it became known that Cyclone B for the gas chambers had been transported by Red Cross vehicles.

Though the ICRC is a purely Swiss organization, employing only Swiss personnel, its activities are not the concern of Bern alone. The Committee exists on donations from all the major nations and some smaller states. Donations to the Red Cross are not only a matter of honour but, to be frank, a profitable investment as you never know where and when your compatriots will need help, which can be given only by the International Committee. In 1986 (the year the Soviet soldiers returned home thanks to the assistance of the ICRC) the Soviet Red Cross committee handed 16,000 Swiss francs to Geneva. Compared to the contribution made by some other countries it can hardly be regarded as a large donation: Czechoslovakia gave 29,000, Poland over 50,000 and Thailand donated 45,000.

One of the movement's founders called the representatives of the Red Cross "unarmed soldiers." This simile is, perhaps, accurate in one particular way: these people voluntarily do their duty with no less zeal than regular soldiers response to orders from their superiors.



A Red Cross plane bringing relief to an African country...

Should the ICRC take sides?

The ICRC activities can be also described in figures. Last year it distributed medical aid worth 7 million Swiss francs, and dispatched food, clothes and tents for those in need, valued at 45 million francs.

The Committee's overall budget is approximately 450 million francs. Who are primarily the potential recipients of aid? In Africa it is Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia; in Asia it is the Afghan and Kampuchean refugees, the Philippines, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, in Central America it is Nicaragua and El Salvador.

How does the International Committee go about its work?

One graphic example of this is the work done by the group helping the victims of the Iran-Iraq war, one of the cruelest wars in the past decades, where practically all norms of international humanitarian law have been violated.

Though prisoners in this war had not much to rely on, all the same the representatives of the International Committee have tried to improve their conditions.

In Iraq they have managed to register a large number of POWs. They found a great number of civilians, old people and children in the camps. The workers of the Committee visited the prisoners until the authorities banned them. Every three months they went to examine the living conditions of approximately 25,000 Kurdish refugees. What the International Committee can add to its credit is that it has played an important role in improving the treatment of POWs. The Committee has also found countries who have agreed to shelter a certain number of refugees from Iran. In one year alone the Committee delivered 415,000 letters to Iranian POWs and took back 345,000 messages.

In Iran the conditions for the International Committee to work in proved even more difficult. The representatives of the Red Cross were at first allowed to visit the POW camps then the visits were forbidden. In violation of the Geneva conventions they were not permitted to see some categories of the prisoners. POWs were constantly undergoing political and ideological indoctrination, artificially segregated or forced to confront each other which led to a flare-up of violence. Following every incident, the Red Cross workers were banned from continuing their work.

From 1981 to 1985 the Committee organized 14 operations to return home 613 Iranian and 166 Iraqi prisoners of war who were badly wounded or sick. Through the good offices of the Red Crescent Society Iran returned home another 225 Iraqis. At the present time these operations have been halted.

The overall number of those saved might not seem very large. We must not forget, however, that every human life is important, and the ICRC has done what it could under the circumstances. No other public organization could have done so much.

The International Committee regards itself as an absolutely independent body, and bases itself on the principle of refusing to be guided by any political, ideological or religious considerations. This does not make it immune to the occasional dissatisfaction with its activities on the part of different countries. The humanitarian mission pursued by the Committee forbids it to take sides in any conflict. Its duty is to lend a helping hand to anyone who needs it. Whoever the wounded, the prisoners or the captives, it makes no difference to the International Committee, there are no "bad guys" of "good guys" for it. Ideally every human being may depend on its aid. Not all the principles can be successfully observed in real life but what makes the ICRC unique is its reputation.

Representatives of the International Committee are the only people in the world who are allowed freely inside barbed-wired zones, cross the barricades and the front line, or visit occupied territories.

The principle of absolute neutrality, nonetheless, does not always seem to some people to be absolutely correct. This principle opens up unique opportunities for the Committee, but at the same time it may play a pernicious role. Some historians blame the International Committee for its failure to condemn the terrible crimes of the nazis. The ICRC, they hold, should have expressed its attitude towards the concentration camps.

The Swiss historian Jean-Claude Favez, for whom the ICRC opened up its wartime archives, has stated that the Committee knew what was going on in Germany and the occupied territories, knew this and yet did nothing. The Swiss government, which to the very end had been afraid to fall out with Berlin, also had a hand in it. The refugees who sought asylum in Switzerland were turned away and went to meet their death.

Had the International Committee voiced its protests, another argument goes, Hitler would have refused to observe the Geneva conventions, and even prisoners of war from the West would have found themselves left unprotected. It is possible the ICRC found the most practical way, though in Berlin they were also concerned with the fate of the captured Germans and would not risk the flouting of the Geneva conventions. The point is, however, that this practical policy does seem like trading one human life for another.

Sometimes it succeeds in finding missing people

The International Committee is not only housed in the much photographed building near the U.N. European centre. It also occupies other smaller buildings. Unlike the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees these have no guards so it is possible to visit other sections, not only the Information Department.

The International Committee has the right to request any government to let it visit political prisoners, as this will not be regarded as intervention in the country's internal affairs. The task of the Committee workers is to see all the prisoners and to talk with them without any witnesses, to examine the place of detention and to try and visit it more than once.

What benefit is there in visiting prisoners?

First, the appearance of the Committee workers somewhat restrains the overzealous jailers. Secondly, for a prisoner, who is suffering from malnutrition, confined conditions and frequently from torture or maltreatment, the meeting with an ICRC representative is a ray of hope. Thirdly, the Red Cross representatives bring the prisoners food, clothing and blankets.

The International Committee always keeps silent about what is going on behind the barbed wire. This is the rule. The government, which opens the doors of its prisons, demands silence in return. After every visit the ICRC delegation writes a report and sends it to the government in question. Amnesty International maintains that these reports are effective in stopping torture.

Who works at the ICRC? Those who are able to perform the most divergent tasks such as giving help to the sick and the wounded, searching for missing persons. This kind of work requires dedication and is often dangerous. It pays less than work in science or industry. Nevertheless, each year the Personnel Department has the opportunity to choose a hundred people it needs out of one thousand and a half applicants who are inspired by the idea of serving a noble cause. Usually, a contract with the Committee is for a two-year term. This may be prolonged provided the representative's work is successful, but lifetime service in "the quiet retreat" of the Geneva headquarters cannot be hoped for. The ICRC requires only young and strong workers.

The most usual form of activity for the Red Cross workers will be giving medical aid. For example urgent aid in Chad or Angola, or regular aid to war invalids or refugees in camps, delivering food to countries, which are going through difficulties, as well as controlling the food distribution, which is not always to the liking of the local authorities.

As the ICRC has its own system of radio communications this allows the Red Cross representatives to be independent of the local facilities. The ICRC even broadcasts regularly on shortwave, reporting its activities and announcing the names of those they are searching for.

For over one hundred years the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency has been involved in looking for missing people. Sometimes it succeeds in finding them.

Now the service has at its disposal a whole computerized system. In its memory is stored 60 million cards with the names of the missing persons. Approximately one fifth of the work is associated with the search for those who disappeared during the Second World War. If the search is successful the ICRC attempts to return the missing persons to their homeland or to reunite them with their families. The Committee also issues death certificates or papers certifying a person has been held in captivity, gives documents to refugees, displaced persons or people without citizenship.

One more activity of the International Red Cross is facilitating the release of hostages or saving journalists who, on carrying out their assignments, find themselves in a dangerous situation.

"We now have a round-the-clock hot line," the Committee workers told me. "If you were to disappear your editorial office or relatives could contact us at any time and we will take urgent measures to get in touch with you."

Some statistics on the work of the Committee over a year: Red Cross workers have searched for 27,000 persons (not only journalists, naturally), and have found out about the fate of 7,000... 11,000 certificates on death, sickness, as well as documents attesting to having been taken prisoner, were issued to the relatives of people, whose fate would have been otherwise unknown... 2,000 refugees were given Red Cross documents that will help them to start life anew.

In 1901 Jean Henri Dunant was awarded the Nobel Prize. In 1917, 1944 and 1963 the International Committee of the Red Cross was awarded three more Nobel medals.

Leonid Mlechin

Democracy needs citizens

Leonid Ionin

"Shura, since you have finally decided to switch over to French, I'd rather you called me 'citoyen,' which means 'citizen,' than 'monsieur'."

I don't know exactly what the phrase meant to citizen Ostap Bender, the freedom-loving hero of the satirical novel "The Little Golden Calf" who uttered it, but there is no mistaking its profound meaning to us.

The word "citizen" derives from "city," for it was in cities that the third estate – the bourgeoisie – emerged. In the Middle Ages anyone who migrated to a city was relieved of feudal bondage. As a then current saying went, "The air of the city makes you free."

Much water has flown under the bridges since then, of course, but the word "citizen" has lost none of its implications of dignity, independence and freedom. In 1792, when the Great French Revolution reached its culmination, the word was made an official form of address for all the Frenchmen and Frenchwomen to use instead of "monsieur" and "madame" discarded as attributes of the "old regime." The innovation did not take root, but in any case the word "citizen" now sounds as proud as ever. Because a citizen is a competent and free member of society active in public and political life as opposed to, say, a "king's subject" who docilely bows before his wrath and mercy.

It would hardly have occurred to Ostap Bender to wisecrack like that later when, as fate had willed, the word "citizen" became the antonym to the word "comrade." In the traditional sense (not as an accepted form of address) "comrade" means one of us, a fellow worker. A comrade is someone you make common cause with, someone you understand and are emotionally attached to someone you treat like brother.

...So much for "comrade." As for "citizen," this word has assumed a connotation entirely new to it. It was a common form of address used in interrogations, for instance, in cases when "comradeship" of any kind is entirely out of the question ("citizen investigator," "citizen procurator"). This word has come to embody alienation, to augur ruthless punishment. A person addressed as "citizen" is not actually a free citizen at all, but a slave-like subject.

So let's do citizen Bender justice: in those remote times he had the courage to reject "comradeship" (which proved deceptive in the end, anyway) and to opt for citizenship. By insisting on being addressed as "citizen," Ostap Bender did not imply that he was second-rate socially; on the contrary, he thus protected his right to remain a private individual. His words can be paraphrased as: "I am not building socialism. I have my own aims in life. I choose them of my own free will and consider them worth my while."

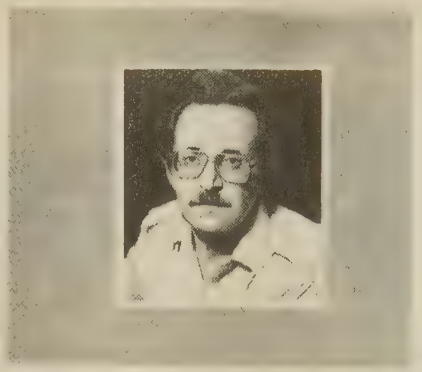
From decades of Stalin's rule we have inherited citizenship (formal) and comradeship (whether formal or real, I'd rather not take it upon myself to judge here). Genuine civic motivation has evaporated as the private objectives and interests of citizens were suppressed and substituted by state (or, more accurately, one-man) dictatorship, and as the members of society, with their private objectives and interests, were deprived of any opportunity to take part in public life. In a word, civic motivation petered out as democracy and freedom did. Freedom was replaced by coercion – either direct, embodied in the duties that arise from being a subject, or indirect, imposed by the relations of comradeship which, in the final analysis, bind one hand and foot by emotional, family, and social ties.

Therefore, I call for the restoration of the sense of civi duty as a form of awareness, and of civic motivation as a form of institutionalizing freedom. Citizenship and comradeship won't do here. The former denies freedom, and the latter presupposes giving up individual choice for the sake of collective goals. For if there is no choice, human life loses all meaning.

Besides, there is actually no such thing as comradeship. Until recently, our unity was seen as a monolith: "a bloc of Communists and non-Party men," "the union of the working class and collective farm peasantry" plus "a layer of intelligentsia." It is only now that we are becoming aware – even though vaguely so far – of the pluralism of our society where everyone "keeps his own company," as a popular joke goes. So doesn't the talk about solid comradeship amount to self-deception?

Democracy demands a citizen. It won't settle for a subject or a comrade.

JUNIOR WORLD



I go to a Czech school

I'm studying at a Czech school, and my teacher is wonderful. He is perhaps the only one in the world who understands that the sole task of schooling is to bring a child to realizing his or her own human self. In the school that he has created three rules of teaching reign supreme: it must be clear, rapid and absorbing. In his school they know that the young mind may go astray and become absent-minded, inconsistent, but they also know how to avoid it. Here they study the art of meditation. Here they teach how to seek the truth without forgetting that feelings might be deceiving, reason is not always reliable, authority must be tested by the truth, and arguments of others are to be thoroughly analyzed. Here they teach history aware of its role – responsibility of man for his actions and its benefits – the pleasure of broadening one's knowledge and following great exploits. Here they teach the art of reading and the art of getting on well with fellow human beings. Here they follow a pragmatic approach: don't start anything if you don't have experience; don't entrust any job to a person who is unwilling to do it... Here my fellow students and I are taught to endure hunger, cold and heat without comlaint. More than that. They teach **tattotechnics** here. Never heard about that? It is the art of getting the right timing and the right sequence. Here they teach how to live in middle age and in old age, they even teach the art of dying...

At a Czech school they also teach me that a better world cannot be imposed from above, but only through the efforts of free human will. Of course, the universal renewal of the world is more like a dream (so I am taught) but it will come, because the world is ready for it, the only thing needed is to overcome the main obstacles – inertness of the soul, carelessness, prejudices born of the apathy of one's mind, obstinacy and fanatical zeal.

What about the much spoken of Armageddon? No, my teacher tells me, the world and the human history cannot end before the world is renewed and the evil is exorcised.

That is how children would have been taught three hundred years ago at the school of the world's greatest teacher John Amos Comenius (1592-1670). I will not repeat the trite ideas about how valid the three-hundred-year-old teaching is today, neither will I start my article with the phrase: "It was Comenius who first..." – what does this "first" mean in such phrases? It was Plato who first... Or Comenius... Or Ushinsky... We all live on one earth and at one time, and today, in this year, I am studying at the school of Comenius – it was he who designed it the way it exists today. The only difference is that tattotechnics is not in the curriculum, and because of this not everything is right today.

Autumn is slowly creeping around the globe, and it so happened that I'm starting my academic year for the second time already. In April it was in Buenos Aires (see NT No. 42), in September – in Prague.

Once again, I'm six years old and my name is Jan. My sister Terezka has been going to school for a year already and she keeps telling so many interesting things about school that I just can't wait until it's September 1. All the shop windows have posters saying: "New school year – new clothes!" Mum took me shopping and we went to department stores laden with children's clothes, we waited in the long queue to buy me new shoes. The word "waited" is hardly correct, for it took us no more than fifteen minutes to get into a large department where all kinds of shoes were sold – shoes of all sizes. Just take a pair from the shelf, try it on and pay – fairly inexpensive. Mum bought me an orange-striped satchel so that every driver could see me from afar and be careful. Mum didn't buy me a uniform, because in Czech schools children don't wear uniforms, but instead she bought me a new sweater, and the first thing we were taught at school was to take off our sweaters quietly and without disturbing others. It is very simple.

Everything was simple at school. The teacher said that during the first half-year she would teach us to say "hallo" and "I'm sorry." And we'll also learn how to read a little, write a little and do some maths just as at kindergarten.

As many as 98 children out of 100 go to kindergartens here. It is one hundred years ago that they started to enroll six-year-olds. I'm writing about Czech schools all the time. For, unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to see Slovak schools and they might have different traditions.

I'm studying at a Czech school, and an expert commission of ten psychologists will decide, if need be, whether I'm fit to start studying. If not, it's OK, I'll be going next year. This year parents of 200 of the 5,000 six-year-olds living in the Praha-V housing development applied for a postponement, and 40 children were permitted to wait one more year. What is important here is that the decision making rests with experts who do not carry out the examination in a clinic (the very word "psychiatrist" makes some mothers faint). The postponement entails no consequences and is not linked with any mental deficiency. At the same time teachers do not have to work with pupils who are psychologically unfit to start

studying. No less important is the fact that the procedure predates going to school. Pupils are not just enrolled indiscriminately with some of them then being separated from the rest on the grounds of ineptitude.

I have my own desk, lying on it are pencils, sketchbooks, notebooks, a ruler, a "living ABC" – all provided free. The teacher speaks in a low kind voice, gently inviting, to the children.

The teacher's voice and manner of speech is of paramount importance. Dmitry Ogorodnov, a prominent Soviet teacher and innovator, whose pupils sing in angelic voices, proved that if the first teacher has a harsh and inexpressive voice, the whole class develops a bad ear for music and deteriorated morals: they start fighting more often and more bitterly. In entrance examinations to teacher-training colleges and especially to those training teachers for primary schools, we should test the applicants' voices and refuse to enroll those with harsh timbres the way short-legged people are not enrolled to ballet schools.

The melodic Czech language seems to have been developed especially for school teachers, and Eva Semelova, who started to teach me, appeared to me to be an ideal teacher. Her voice is a precious tool of education which she exploits to the full. Earlier, I saw such teachers only in the school of Shalva Amonashvili in Tbilisi, Georgia.

If one wants to understand the system of schooling, one needs to see an ordinary lesson and the work of an ordinary teacher. Schoolmaster Milada Jelinkova, unlike many of her colleagues in other countries, never made a fuss over our visit. She just told us we were free to see whatever we liked. Thus my guide, Doctor of Philosophy Alexei Bekhtin, and I found ourselves with the eighth form in a lesson taken by a young teacher, who had recently come here from another school. It was her first lesson, and the openness of this school surprised me very much. In the Soviet Union you'll never get to attend a lesson of a newly employed teacher – we're not sure that the teacher won't disgrace the school. If we don't do something about it, the pedagogical pretensions and the desire to be always first will ruin our school. The best in the world on paper, our school will become the worst in practice. I hate the old argument "Don't you yourself tidy up your home before the guests arrive?" Yes I do, but I never borrow furniture from neighbours. Once I was imprudent enough to ask people responsible for education in a city to let me see a good biology lesson. What I saw was that stuffed birds, collected from all over the district were displayed on each desk to make the lesson more vivid. Everything according to Comenius. He was the first to insist on examples, but he couldn't have dreamed about such interpretations of his concepts.

What are we doing? What on Earth are we doing to our own children?

The impact of John Amos Comenius ideas is felt in the novelties introduced in modern Czech schools

Let's return to the lesson, though. Students of the eighth form came to the lesson, as fourteen-year-olds in this country would, as if doing the school a favour, with worn-out bags instead of briefcases. They lent a negligent ear to the teacher's story about kings-peacemakers (it was a peace lesson), and one lad at the front desk just couldn't sit still and the irritated teacher told him: "Stop it, otherwise I'll send you to the caretaker and he'll find some work for you!" Later, when her threat fell flat she gently clipped him – sit still! She will have it pretty rough (with this lad). Or, perhaps, they will become friends, no matter what happened at the first lesson. She was a good teacher, her story was comprehensive and interesting. She brought the story to the present day and finally said:

"Gorbachev is the man the world has long awaited."

Their faces turned serious, the attitude changed. The teacher managed to stimu-

late them, after all. **Something happened** in the lesson, and what else is needed? Every lesson must have this "something", if only for a moment. That is why various inspections, especially clumsy ones, are so harmful for teachers. Any inspector would have noted that the pupils were passive – whatever the teacher tried, no response came from them, her story was not always logical, no aids were brought to the lesson, etc. This report would have ruined the teacher's reputation and it would have taken a long time to mend it.

And the peace lesson was still a success.

I'm studying at a Czech school, and that means that today, on September 1, together with other pupils I'm listening to the traditional radio address by Education Minister Academician Karel Julis, which is broadcast to every classroom.

My long experience tells me to never go uninvited to the people entrusted with authorizing education. Sometimes it seemed that an interview was indispensable for my article, and still I decided against it. I don't understand these people. At kindergartens, speaking to little ones I always try hard to carry on the conversation as if I were talking to a grownup, otherwise they'll never understand me. When talking to the head of a local education department or some other official there I realize with horror that I have started to lisp and to mumble, otherwise they'll never understand me.

These people are often good organizers and usually able politicians, but when it comes to pedagogics, they are usually no better than the average kindergarten teacher if not the children. I don't know why it is so, but during my forty years in education I met a lot of clever teachers and wise principals, but not a single talented bureaucrat. I'm exaggerating of course, I have met a couple of clever officials, but the system has long ousted them.

My reader, excuse me. I am studying at a Czech school, but my thoughts are here in the Soviet Union, and it's only human. I am not an envious man, but when I find something really good abroad, I always wonder why we can't have it here. Abundance of shoes in shops is one thing – you can't achieve it at once. But is it so difficult for the Ministry of Education executives to address children and their parents with kind and humane words at the beginning of an academic year?

That is what I was thinking, listening to the radio address of the Czech minister. He spoke of very simple things, he said that rush is harmful for education, that a child cannot develop normally if he or she is constantly pressed for time, and that rush in education is responsible for many negative effects.

Later, when I was at a Czech rural school, its woman principal told me: "We haven't had such a minister for a long time."

I sighed. I sincerely wish our education leaders could hear such words spoken about them in our schools in the towns and in the country.

So I didn't go to the ministry, neither did I hold any formal interviews. But it's easy to write about school in a sense that everybody there is a student and anyone's interview is just as good. Our guide, a graduate from a high school in the village of Kristanovice, North Moravia, told us that at university entrance exams teachers stopped asking her questions when they learned that she was from a provincial high school – a very indicative fact. The quality of education in provincial schools is higher than in the capital, and teachers who work in Prague are getting extra pay the way in this country people working in the Far North do. It is more difficult to live in the capital and housing here is scarce. It was also interesting to learn that religious instruction is not frowned upon in Czechoslovakia. If several people decide they want their children to receive religious instruction, the school is obliged by law to allocate a room and sufficient time in the schedule for the local priest, this is how it is done in several schools I visited. And I never noticed any agitation about the fact. Some 15 out of 400 children attend religious classes. So what?

Much more complex problems, however, confront the entire system of education. Education has been compulsory in Czechia for a hundred years now, there is sort of a cult of the school, it was through schools that the nation, the national language and culture were reborn and matured. Comenius' idea of improving society through education at school has always been a feature of the national thinking. For a long time the system of education has had the pattern of three years of basic learning plus another three years or eight years of high school. By 1945 the pattern became five years to start with followed by either four years or eight years of high school. As you can see, it took thirteen years to complete one's secondary education, and not ten as is the case now. But this kind of education is dearly remembered even now, since that time the maturita (the General Certificate of Education) has been universally respected and any attempts to depreciate it are perceived as a kind of offence. The respect for education and diplomas has been cultivated for centuries, and a person who excells at a university is granted a Ph.D. or M.D. or something similar, without any additional studies. And all his or her life such a person will be addressed as Doctor, even in everyday conversations.

However, the system of different education for different social groups was of course undemocratic, and after 1948 the pattern became universal: 5+4 for everybody and four years of high school, making up the total 13 years. For example, a concept of a secondary school discussed by experts in this country presumes nine compulsory years (4+5) and two additional years of secondary school.

I am citing these figures because the concept will be discussed at the coming congress of teachers, and the youth of today knows no more important problem. Are the two years enough to prepare students for higher learning? Will these two years produce good university students? Or are we once again economizing on education only to blame ourselves in the future?

In Czechoslovakia, things were developing in the following way: in 1976, not uninfluenced by the Soviet model, they adopted the law on a universal compulsory ten-year period of instruction. Here is an important though subtle difference: not universal secondary education, but just compulsory **schooling** for ten years. The progress here was in the fact that only after ten years at school could one start working.

I happened to speak to a prominent Czech scholar, one of the founding fathers of the existing system. He told me that it was planned neither as a simple shortening nor as an extension of the period of instruction, but as qualitative restructuring of the curriculum. What is there to be done if people understand everything differently, if they see that the quality of education has been lowered and the maturita depreciated? Teachers keep complaining that pupils are reluctant to study, that the once overcrowded university library is now closed on Sundays, that the prestige of the teaching profession is declining, etc. – but should one go abroad to hear this?

Problems... problems... Is there a school without problems anywhere in the world? The lesson I've learned after studying at a Czech school is: it is necessary to promote equality and one common universal school in times of radical social changes. But as time goes on, at the start of a new stage of development, clever people, Big Brains are what matters, the country can't do without Very Clever People unless it wants to fall into poverty and backwardness. At this stage it's time we abolished the idea of a common school for everybody and channelled our efforts in two equally important directions: the development of a school for everybody where the culture of the people will be preserved and cultivated (no less than nine to ten years), and a high school for the specially able, training for college – it can't be less than three to four years, otherwise the higher learning – the pillar of progress – will be ruined.

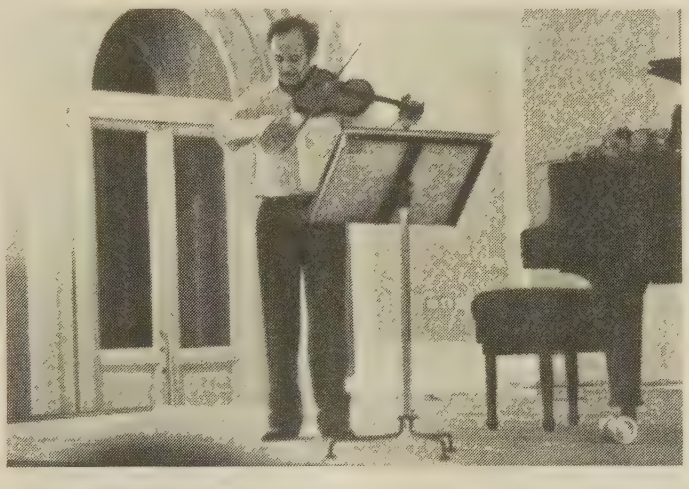
This solution, however, will give rise to a host of new problems. Nothing doing, only John Amos Comenius could afford titling his treatise "A general consultation concerning the improvement of human affairs."

Simon Soloveichik
PRAGUE-MOSCOW

A concert that came as a pleasant surprise

Violinist Vladimir Lanzman gives public performance in Moscow

The concert was not announced, not a single ticket had been sold, but the Moscow Conservatoire's Rakhmaninov Hall was packed to capacity on that autumn evening. In the audience were the friends, fans and colleagues of Vladimir Lanzman, a brilliant graduate of the Moscow Conservatoire, a violinist who gained worldwide fame in the late sixties. Fifteen years ago his name disappeared from billboards in this country: Lanzman had emigrated to the West. He is professor of violin at the University of Montreal, the city where in 1966 he won the top prize at an international competition regarded as one of the most representative and challenging in the world.



Vladimir Lanzman performed in his shirt-sleeves to give the concert an air of informality.

Vladimir Lanzman didn't expect to play on the Moscow stage again. His performance was arranged by the Moscow State Conservatoire headed by Professor Viktor Tretyakov. Its teachers Irina Bochkova and Elena Chugayeva had worked hard to prepare for the concert.

He came to Moscow with an ordinary tourist group, his aim being to show his homeland to his American wife and to meet his friends.

"The permission to visit the U.S.S.R. came as a surprise to me. The offer to perform before a Moscow audience was another stroke of good luck. What seemed incredible a few years ago proved to be easy and simple.

"I could see for myself that the changes taking place in my country are profound and serious. I am now proud more than ever of my country, which has such tremendous intellectual and material potential. In fact, I have always considered Russians to be the best people in the world."

"Why did you decide to emigrate?"

"I was forced to. Consider my situation at the time. I had graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire, one of the best in the world. I was lucky enough to be a student of Yuri Yankelevich, an outstanding teacher who made me a real musician. The government had spent a lot of money on my education. I was one of the winners of the Jacques Thibaud and Marguerite Long international contest in Paris, and had won first prize in Montreal. But what were the opportunities open to me?

"To begin with, they didn't even want to let me go to Montreal. It was only thanks to Leonid Kogan, who spent two days ringing up officials, that permission was granted.

"After a while, I was forbidden to go abroad. My trips to Poland, Canada and Iceland were cancelled.

"At that moment a request came to Goskontsert (the state agency organizing performing tours) inviting me to play two concerts in Rotterdam. Goskontsert replied that Lanzman was too busy with engagements in the Soviet Union. Actually, I was playing one-night gigs at the Mayakovsky Theatre for 3 rubles 50 kopecks a night. In the end, some official protégé went to Rotterdam instead of me. If I could have done what the country's best teachers had taught me to do, I would still be living here and would never have left. I'm saying this with full responsibility. I'm no exception, many fine musicians found themselves abroad for the simple reason that they couldn't fully employ their talents at home.

"In 1972 a gala concert was to be held at the Palace of Congresses to be attended by members of the government. Leonid Kogan gathered the best violinists in the country, winners of top international prizes. On the day of the concert I had a call from the Philharmonic: 'Vladimir, the programme has been cut. You are not going to perform, after all.' I knew I'd had enough. If I was not trusted to perform on the Moscow stage it was an affront, a slap in the face.

I would never have emigrated, because this country is my country. With its culture, language and its intellectual atmosphere.

"I could have been useful to my country, for whose freedom my father fought and gave his life. I could have been useful and fulfilled myself as an artist. Granted, concert halls in the West are well attended, but let's face it, many people come out of habit. It's part of the routine: they work during the day, and then put on evening clothes and go to a concert. And then to a café. In the West, I've never seen anyone crying while listening to music.

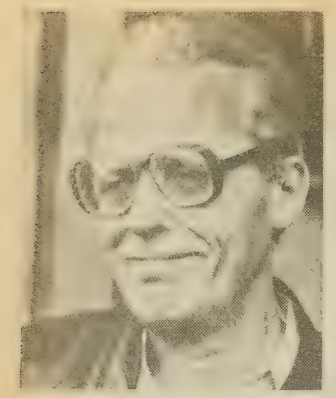
"With Russian people, you have to reach out to them, to strike a chord in their souls. And if you a musician succeed, they are infinitely grateful to you.

"Now I am doing my own thing – the violin and not paper work, or unravelling intrigues, or refuting anonymous denunciations, or trying to earn a living by playing one-night stands. And yet I'm sorry that it all happened as it did. However successful an émigré may be in his career, he is still like an uprooted tree; there is always a lingering pain and the bitterness of frustrated hopes."

"But now, after 15 years, you must have made some new friends and formed attachments?"

"I have a wife with whom I'm happy. As for my friends, they were at my concert yesterday. One couldn't dream of better ones."

Olga Bai



The writer **Boris Vasiliev** is now working on a new novel called "The House That Grandfather Built," in which he dwells on the generation of his father who was a tsarist officer during World War I and became a Red Army commander after the Revolution.

We know Boris Vasiliev as an author writing mostly about those who fought at the frontline in 1941. He saw action then himself as an officer. His novels disclose the mentality of the ordinary fighting-man. His well-known books like "Not on the Active List" and "The Dawns Are Quiet Here" have been adapted for the stage and screen. The film "War Came Tomorrow" – a screen version of Vasiliev's book of the same name, made by the young director Yuri Kara – was released here last year. The story itself, which appeared in the Yunost magazine, drew a torrent of readers' letters. Many amateur drama companies all over the country put it on almost overnight. This year director Iosif Heifits has finished screening Boris Vasiliev's story entitled "Old Waifs and Strays."

"Ironically," Boris Vasiliev said with a grin, "film makers had accepted me to their Union before writers did to theirs."

* * *

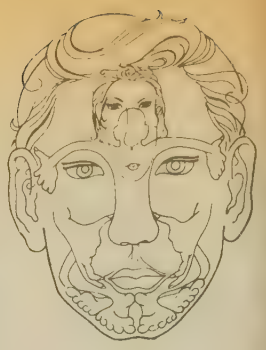
Bui Quoc Chau, 46, of Vietnam, known in many countries as "Dr Chau," has no formal medical education. He studied to be a lawyer first, and a philologist later. In 1965, he fell for ancient Oriental medicine.

Following South Vietnam's liberation in 1976, the young doctor was offered a job by the Ho Chi Minh City's Medical Administration and assigned to treat drug addicts.

Today Dr Chau specializes in facial diagnosis.

"My method stems from such departments of traditional Oriental medicine as massage, reflex therapy and acupuncture. While using them I draw upon modern medical theory. All the body limbs and sections are 'represented' on the face by certain biologically active points and areas. I have drawn up 22 diagrams showing these connections. For instance, each individual vertebra has a precise facial point responsible for it..."

In 1983, Dr Chau opened a clinic in Ho Shi Minh City and hired a staff of assistants. The clinic caters to 300 patients a day.



"The authorities have rented to me a house to live and work in, and pay me a monthly salary of 20,000 dongs (about 20 rubles). This is not enough to run the clinic on, but we offer treatment free of charge any way. We have a special box for the patients to contribute their donations to..."

The clinic replenishes its budget by selling balms and medical instruments invented by Dr Chau.

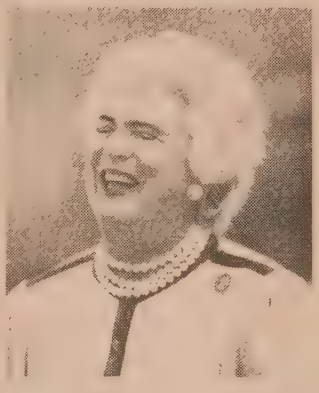
Dr Chau's methods are al-

The President's wife

He calls her Barb, and she addresses him – unexpectedly for a wife of 43 years standing – by his full name, George Bush. On January 20, 1989, Barbara Bush is to become the First Lady of America, and move to the White House.

In 1942, Barbara Pierce, the daughter of a big New York publisher, a high-school student in her last year, met George Bush, then 17, at a Christmas party dance. The stalwart youth had just enlisted in the U.S. Navy after school and was training to become a naval pilot. A year later, Barbara and George got secretly engaged, and the bridegroom left for the Pacific theatre of operations. In 1945, George Bush, the U.S. Navy's youngest pilot, came home on his pre-demob leave, and a wedding was arranged.

Barbara did not go back to college where she had studied for just two years. In her own words, she opted for the career of a wife and a mother.



The career of a wife turned out to be a bumpy one: having finished the University, George Bush decided to try his luck in Texas which was in the middle of an oil boom there. Barbara, a sit-at-home raised in the classical Yankee traditions of the U.S. northeast – and already a mother by then – was in two minds about going to a new place. But her hesitations lasted but one day. The Bushes arrived in Odessa, Texas, together.

In 43 years of their life together, they have "changed the scene" 17 times. Besides, by virtue of being Vice-Presi dent's wife, Barbara Bush ha been to all the 50 states of th U.S. and to 68 countries. Al though she rubs shoulder with leading national an foreign politicians and know all about diplomatic protoco Barbara Bush remains a easy-going, affable an friendly housewife with a larg family on her hands. Barbar Bush is an expert cook, goe in for gardening, and share her husband's hobbies motor-yachting and angling.

She gives most of her atten tion, however, to her famil doting on her husband, fiv children and ten grandchil dren.

At one of the numerou press conferences the pas few months were crowde with, Barbara Bush told news men she did not always shar her husband's views, but al ways spoke her mind in hi presence. Nevertheless, h made his own decisions on a matters pertaining to his work she added. This outwardly in nocent statement was take by many as a dig at Nanc

ady known in the U.S., Fr-
nce, Canada, Australia, Au-
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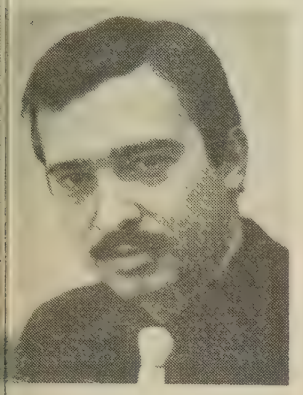


1986, a group of enthusias-
young staff writers of the Teatralnaya zhizn magazine came up with the idea of holding a ten-day festival of amateur theatrical companies. That was a bold idea because most of the companies did not even have permanent premises of their own, were semilegal, and acted on improvised stages. Few believed that the idea would ever materialize, until someone ventured to provide the venue for it. That "someone" was **Yuri Dubovitsky,** Candidate of Sciences,Director of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute's House of Culture, a cryophysicist by profession and a public-spirited person by vocation.

The festival and the plays shown at it came in for favourable press comments, on the whole, but, what is most important, created a precedent. The problems and the very existence of amateur theatrical companies began to be taken seriously only after those first "Lefortovo Games '88."

"The Festival has proved," Yuri Dubovitsky says, "that even a modest House of Culture can host such events on the self-supporting basis. All the organizational problems involved can be solved in just two months or so, without oversized bureaucratic staff and any red tape. Last year, it took only four people to organize the festival.

* * *

The book "700 Days of Szent Jupat" by **Nandor Fa** is a great success with Hungarian readers. The author, a well-known athlete, describes a round-the-globe trip he made on board the yacht Szent Jupat. In September 1987, the yacht finally dropped anchor in the

Yugoslavian port of Opatija, upon covering a total distance of 30,000 nautical miles.

Nandor Fa, 35, was born in the ancient city of Szekesfehervar, a former seat of Hungarian kings. He has been going in for sports actively – wrestling, canoeing – since the age of 11. At 27, Nandor became a noted yachtsman, and in 1983-84 – a member of the Hungarian national yachting team.

Now the Hungarian athlete is busy preparing for the biggest undertaking in his life – a solo round-the-world trip on board a sail boat.

Nandor is to make a start off New York on Semptember 15, 1990, the opening day of the international round-the-world sailing contest.

"I shall sail on the biggest yacht there is," he says. "It is going to be 18 metres long, and its speed will be five times that of the Szent Jupat. It is only such a yacht that will give me a chance to do well in a contest versus 40 professional yachtsmen. The trip will take till the spring, 1991. I plan breaking it up into 45-day periods, and to have five 30-minute naps a day. If I play my cards right, I shall accomplish something no one has yet managed before – a solo round-the globe voyage on board a yacht of my own design and making."

Janos Juhani Nagy

BUDAPEST

gan who is reported to
had a strong influence
her husband's govern-
nt and personnel policy.

In accordance with the
erican tradition, the wife
a political leader has a
ding role to play in his
eer. Presidential candi-
es' wives campaign for
es as vigorously as their
sbands do.

Some experts in conduct-
election campaigns
ubted this time that Bar-
ra Bush would be of much
lp to her husband. The
ng is that next to a youth-
and athletic George Bush
grey-haired Barbara,
ghtly on the stout side,
ks rather old-fashioned.
e NBC's Jane Pauley was
ite blunt about it when she
ked her: "Your husband is
man of the eighties, and
u are a woman of the for-
s. What will you say to
at?"

Barbara Bush answered
s question by her share in
e election campaign which had seen her husband through.

Society columnists believe that the White House lifestyle will change dramatically after January 20, 1989. The Hollywood spirit brought in by Nancy Reagan will give way to Barbara Bush's quiet household atmosphere. She is noted for her even temper – so much so that even the security officers taking care of the administration members and their families have code-named her "Tranquillity."

Another characteristic feature of the 41st President's wife is naturalness. Barbara flatly refused to have her hair dyed and to go on a slim diet, as her husband's publicity team had recommended. Her motto is: take me for what I am. The only concession Barbara Bush made, as regards her outward appearance was wearing a thriple pearl necklace, which became her symbol of sorts.

Following an American tradition, the President's wife assumes responsibility for a certain nationwide social programme. Barbara Bush intends to carry on the anti-illiteracy campaign, illiteracy still being, alas, quite a problem in the U.S. She has been in it for rather long, helping raise extra funds for the campign. Back from China, where she had spent more than a year with her husband, Barbara toured the country with paid lectures, illustrating them with slide projections. All the receipts were remitted to the Episcopal Church School in Houston.

In the meantime, the White House is waiting for "perestroika." The present First Lady's cloakrooms have been converted into nurseries. After all, Barbara Bush is, besides everything else, a grandmother.

Evgeny Andrianov,
our own
correspondent

NEW YORK

A drama brought to an early finale

On December 1, a group of terrorists seized hostages in the city of Ordzhonikidze, and blackmailed the authorities into having them flown to Israel the following day. On December 4 the criminals, extradited by the Israeli authorities, were flown to Moscow

NT has asked a senior research associate at the Institute of State and Law of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, **VITALY BORDUNOV** (an expert on international marine, air and space law), to comment:

Here is a summary of what happened. Thirty children studying in grade 4B of school No. 42 in Ordzhonikidze, accompanied by their 24-year-old teacher, Natalia Yefimova, went on an excursion to a printshop. When they were about to leave, a man met them at the gates of the printshop. He invited them to board a bus which, according to him, was waiting to take them home. The armed bandits in the bus took the children hostage... The bus drove up to the regional party committee, and the bandits fired shots to attract attention. Soon afterwards officers of the Ministry of the Interior of the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic arrived on the scene to negotiate. Two hours later a woman, the former wife of one of the hijackers, came out of the bus and gave the authorities the details of their demands: that they be given drugs, a ransom in hard currency, and a cargo plane to take them to a country with which the Soviet Union has no diplomatic relations. The woman warned that the hijackers were armed and that there were explosives and cans of petrol on the bus. They would blow up the bus with the hostages unless their demands were met...

A crisis centre was immediately formed of representatives of the KGB, the Ministry of the Interior, the Foreign Ministry, and the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Civil Aviation. The centre was given sweeping powers to assure the release of the children and their teacher. It was provided with two aircraft and a large sum in foreign currency.

The KGB officer for Stavropol Territory managed to enter into contact with the leader of the gang, 38-year-old P. Yakshiyants. After prolonged negotiations and a pledge that all demands would be met (drugs were delivered to the bandits at once), an agreement was reached on the release of some of the hostages. On the morning of December 2, when the bus, escorted by Ministry of the Interior and KGB cars, arrived at the airport in Mineralniye Vody, 13 children were released. The bandits took the drugs as soon as they were given them and it was hard to predict their behavior.

An IL-76T cargo plane was flown from Sheremetyevo Airport near Moscow to Mineralniye Vody. The hijackers demanded a cargo plane, as apparently they were planning to drive the bus onto it. The ransom was paid to the hijackers. Having carefully searched the plane, they shielded themselves with the children as they were boarding the plane. Only then were the children released. From that moment on, the crew of the plane were their hostages.

They flew Sukhumi-Ankara-Larnaca (Cyprus) route nonstop and landed at a military airfield 20 km from Tel Aviv at 18:00 local time. The route was coordinated by the air traffic control services of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and with appropriate agencies in Turkey, Cyprus, and Israel. Before the plane took off, the Soviet consular group, temporarily working in Israel since November, secured the agreement of the Israeli side to allow the plane to land in Israel.

After the plane landed, the

Epilogue

Aryeh Levin is a middle-aged man with refined manners, a career diplomat. He joined the Israeli Foreign Ministry in 1962, and was first posted to a number of African countries. He represented his country's interests for four years in France and then in Iran for a similar period. In the 1980s he held the post of Deputy Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. and headed the department of political studies at the Foreign Ministry with ambassadorial rank.

"Mr Levin, as we all know, Foreign MInister Shevardnadze has thanked the Government of the State of Israel for the good will it showed in cutting short an act of terrorism. Could you provide details of the cooperation of the Soviet and Israeli authorities in dealing with the emergency?"

"Early on the morning of December 2, a high-ranking official of the Soviet Foreign Ministry (I have been asked not to disclose his name) contacted the Israeli government directly and asked it to allow a Soviet IL-76T plane to land at an Israeli airfield. The Israeli government was told that aboard the plane was a group of terrorists holding hostages. It transpired that at first the bandits had demanded that they be flown to Iraq or Pakistan, but had then changed their minds and given the authorities a choice of Israel, Egypt, Pakistan or South Africa. They preferred countries without diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. They could not have been flown to South Africa as the plane would have had to be refuelled, and they finally chose Israel.

"A few hours after the contact was made, the Israeli government gave permission for the Soviet aircraft to land at Ben Gurion Airport, 20 kilometres from Tel Aviv. As soon as it entered Israel airspace, two Israeli fighters began to escort it. The crew of the plane were warned of that. The Israeli side tried to establish contact with the hijackers as well. In re-

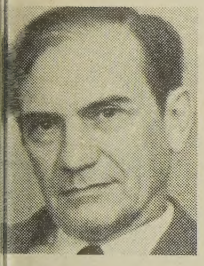
ijackers took some time to check whether the plane was indeed in Israel nd not in Syria. They were satisfied fter an Israeli soldier showed them his dentity card. After that the hijackers urrendered to the police. The ransom oney and weapons were taken from nem and they were taken to prison ells, but not for long. On the night of ecember 3 two planes flew them from el Aviv back to Moscow. By a decision of the Israeli authorities, the bandits were extradited to the Soviet nion and the cargo plane and ransom oney were returned.

The hijackers had clearly not expected that. They demanded, in the rst place, that they be flown to a country without diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and themselves chose Israel, counting on the leniency of the Israeli government; at any rate, they did not expect that they could be returned to the Soviet Union. The drama could indeed have taken a different course...

Under the international conventions on combating air piracy, the country where a hijacked plane lands has the right to decide whether to punish the terrorists according to its own laws or to extradite them to the country of origin. In other words, as a party to international conventions on combating air piracy, Israel had every right to deal with the hijackers under its own jurisdiction. But Tel Aviv decided to hand the hijackers over, thereby precluding the repetition of such acts of terrorism and dashing the hopes of anyone willing to follow the example of the terrorists from Ordzhonikidze. Israel actions are an example of how civilized nations should cooperate in combating a common problem – air piracy.

The moves of the Soviet side were in sharp contrast with what we saw during the tragically ended attempt to hijack a plane by the Ovechkin family. The sad experience was taken into account. Human lives cannot be put at risk and readiness to make concessions to terrorists must become a norm. The more so as patently this can bring good results. ■

Priority of humanitarian values



NT reporter Y. Borovoy meets with **Aryeh Levin,** head of the group of Israeli consular officials, now working in Moscow

ponse to our request, a crew member aid the bandits could not speak English. He was told that they could speak Russian. The only thing that interested the hijackers was whether they were really being taken to Israel. They feared that they would be deceived and the plane would land in Syria. Having received our assurances, they seemed to calm down. Even a brief conversation with them was enough to make it clear that we were dealing with hardened criminals.

"The plane was instructed not to fly over densely populated districts as it approached the airport. The plane landed on December 2 at 18:00, soon after dusk. It was the first Aeroflot plane to land in Israel for twenty-odd years. The traditional exchange of greetings took place between the crew and the traffic controllers.

"Present at the airport were the Israeli Defence Minister, the Chief of Staff, and the Air Force Commander.

"The plane was towed well away from the central building of the airport. Thirty-five minutes later the hijackers surrendered to security men, who confiscated the ransom money, 3 million dollars, to return it to the Soviet government. According to the Jerusalem Posts, the leader of the gang offered Israel half the ransom money in return for its cooperation and "good will." After a brief interrogation, the hijackers where taken to Abu Kabir Prison, were they were kept in solitary confinement until they were returned to the Soviet Union.

"Members of the crew were immediately taken to the hotel Ramada Continental, where their Israeli Civil Aviation colleagues gave a friendly reception for them. Staying at the same hotel, incidentally, are members of the Soviet consular group, who were also actively involved in the operation.

"After my meeting on December 3 with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, a meeting which profoundly impressed me, the IL-76T and a TU-154 took off late in the evening at an interval of one hour and flew on to the Soviet Union. There were two terrorists on board each plane. The rest you probably know from reports in the Soviet press."

"Our readers would welcome your opinion about the moral aspects of the incident."

"My own view is that both our countries acted in keeping with the norms of civilized international behavior in an unprecedented show of cooperation. In this day and age human life must be valued far above ideological or any other disputes. The priority of universal humanitarian values must be asserted in today's world...

"In spite of the fact that there are as yet no diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, nor any extradition agreements between them, both sides, guided by good will, disregarded formalities and dealt international terrorism a blow. Terrorists must never go unpunished, whatever the goals they may pursue. Conniving with them amounts to provoking them to perpetrate more crimes. They must meet with retribution wherever they go.

"The positive changes under way in your country played a very important part in the drama. In this particular case we very much hope that the Soviet government, proceeding from the humanitarian principles to which it is committed, will not resort to capital punishment for the air pirates."

An all-girl trip to the South Pole

The celebrated female Metelitza ski club is planning an unprecedented trip in the Antarctic

A team of Soviet women skiers has arrived at the Mirny station in the Antarctic. This team of polar explorers is unique. The Metelitza ski club have been participating in Arctic expeditions for more than 15 years now – on their own during vacations. The team has accumulated a vast experience of survival in the extreme conditions of the Far North. Women skiers never rely on the help of aviation, they make their trips alone, carrying the minimum of supplies they need by themselves.

This winter these valiant women decided to head for the Antarctic and try to reach the South Pole. The route promises to be difficult, one need only recall expeditions by Scott, Shackelton, Amundsen... No woman has ever been to the South Pole yet. Our team has a chance to be the first.

The idea of an Antarctic expedition came to members of the Metelitza club many years ago during a 2,600-kilometre ski ride of Finland. All the following expeditions were actually a training for the team's main endeavour. It's very difficult to stay loyal to your dream for many years, but every winter they went to the Arctic for training, to develop tactics and to test equipment.

"There are no easy trips in the Arctic," says Valentina Kuznetsova, the team's captain from its very first days, "It's difficult to imagine another spot on Earth where man is so exposed to Nature's whims than at the Arctic or the Antarctic. I should say that these regions have not become more easily accessible to people since the time of their discovery. As before, every step there still requires all your strength."

Nansen used to say: "You can't grow accustomed to the cold." However, these women who are daring enough to challenge the Antarctic, have nine Arctic expeditions to their credit. They covered thousands of miles of icy wilderness, enduring blizzards and ice shifts, snow devils and freezing winds. Their load of supplies is not light either – up to 50 kilogrammes per person. True, they never use heavy rucksacks, but tow sledges instead.

Some people may ask: is it women's business to explore the Arctic?

However, the fair sex also want to penetrate the unknown. If we look back we will see that women always followed men in difficult undertakings. Now, it's the Antarctic's turn.

And one more very important point. The Metelitza women are really strong personalities, possessing both the will and the courage necessary for trips many male polar explorers would have not dared to make. So is it a lust for the unknown, for self-assertion? Or sport? Not exclusively. In their expeditions women skiers are not just fighting against vast expanses of polar areas, they also carry out medical experiments, medical and biological research programmes, helping to broaden the scientists' knowledge of the potential capabilities of the female constitution in the extreme conditions of the North.

Metelitza on training: Heading for the Antarctic. *Photos by V. Volkov*

"Our trips," continues Kuznetsova, "give us more vigour, and strength, make us younger and more beautiful. After a trip, it's easier to cope with everyday difficulties both at home and at work."

The team was formed in 1968, and numbered just six members. Today it includes nearly twenty women. Younger people have joined the team but its backbone remains intact. To earn admission, hard work and regular training are required. The 12 fittest women were picked for the expedition. But only ten of them will later head for the South Pole.

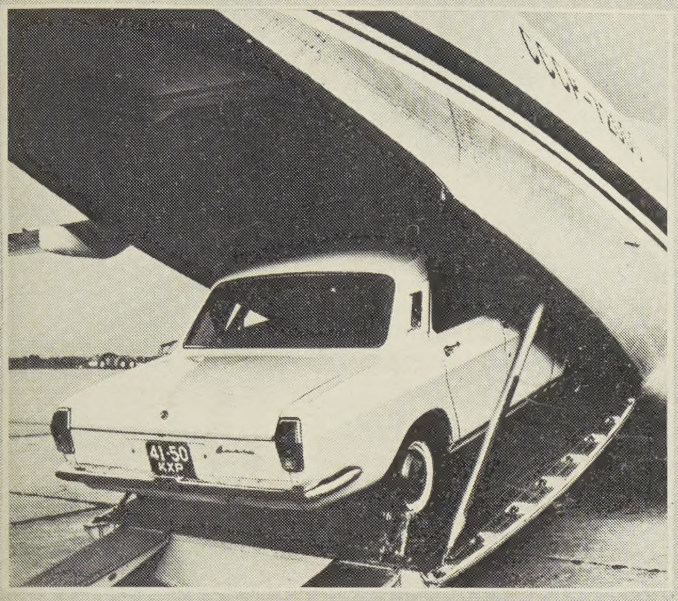
Last winter five members of the team came to the Antarctic. In the vicinity of the Molodezhnaya station Valentina Kuznetsova, Svetlana Guryeva, Antonina Yegorova, Irina Solovyova and Tatyana Kuznetsova made trial trips, tested the equipment and outfits, and developed the tactics for the future expedition.

"Meteorologists, glaciologists and engineers who took part in the expedition to the Vostok station," said Valentina Kuznetsova in conclusion, "told us much about the life there, readily shared their experience of ski trips under the rigorous conditions of the region. The trial trips have shown that our expedition is quite feasible."

Valentin Dubin

AN-72

– Meet the new generation of cargo planes



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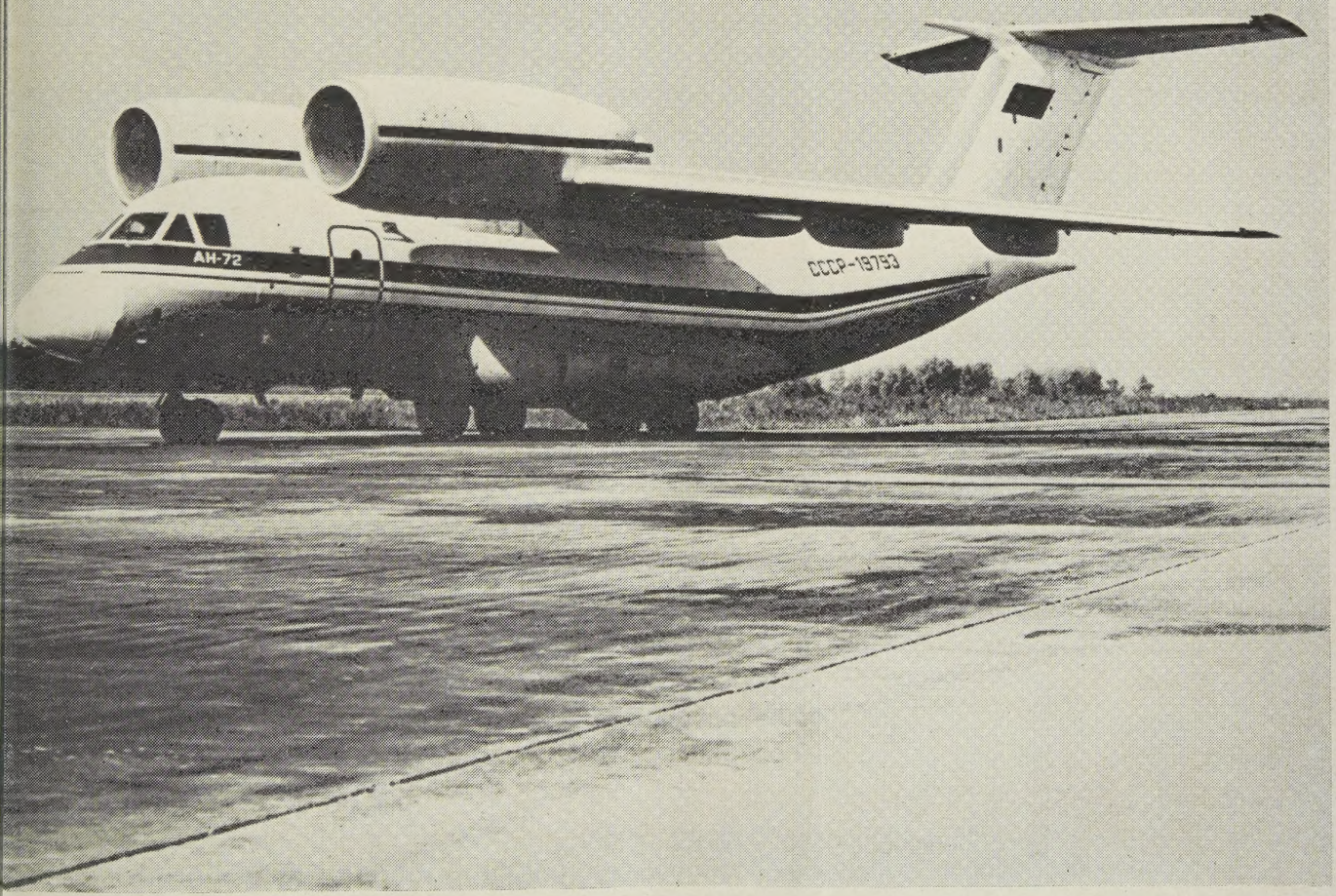

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